

# JOURNAL OF EARLY SOUTHERN DECORATIVE ARTS

WINTER 1996    VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 2



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OF EARLY SOUTHERN  
DECORATIVE ARTS



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The *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* is published twice a year by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA). It presents research on decorative arts made in the South prior to 1820, with an emphasis on object studies in a material culture context.

Potential contributors are encouraged to contact the Managing Editor for guidelines concerning subject matter and manuscript preparation.

All correspondence concerning the *Journal* should be sent to the Managing Editor, *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, MESDA, P O Box 10310, Winston-Salem, NC 27108. Correspondence concerning membership in MESDA, including renewals and address changes, should be directed to the Coordinator of Membership Services, MESDA, P O Box 10310, Winston-Salem, NC 27108.

Articles from the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* are abstracted in the *Bibliography of the History of Art and American History and Life*.

The paper used for this publication meets the minimum American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984,™ and contains 20% post-consumer fiber.

Some back issues of the *Journal* are available.

ISSN 0098-9266

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Designed and typeset in Adobe Garamond by Kachergis Book Design,  
Pittsboro, North Carolina

Printed in the United States of America

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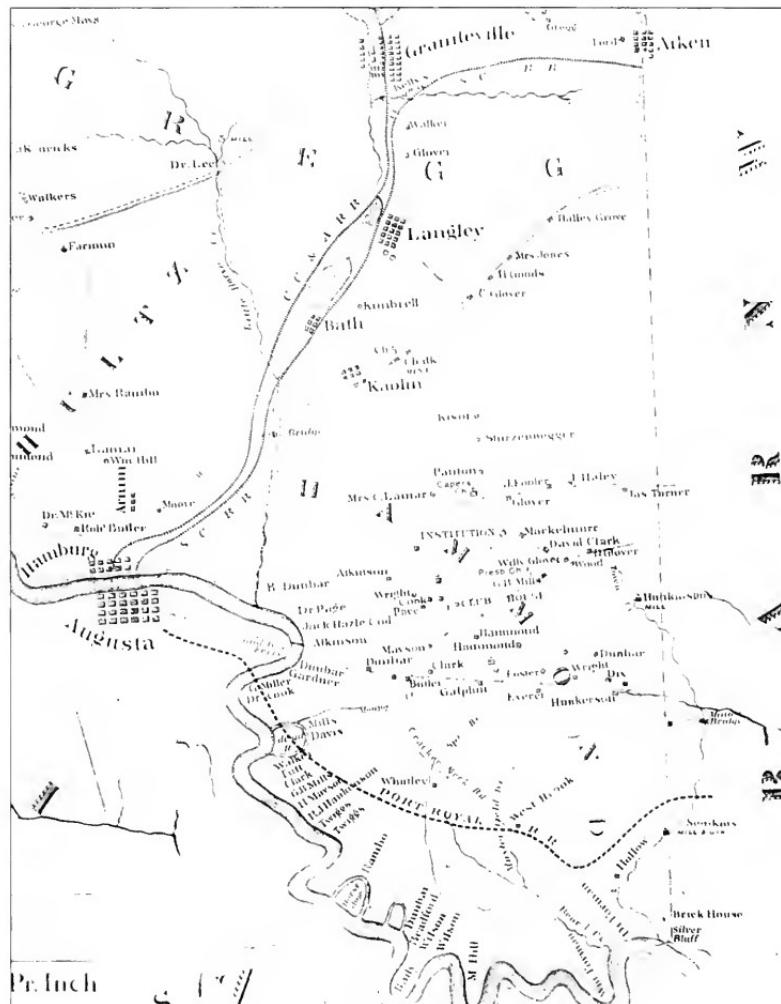
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# The Southern Porcelain Company of Kaolin, South Carolina: A Reassessment

J. GARRISON STRADLING

THE SOUTHERN PORCELAIN COMPANY was created in 1856 and, until after the Civil War, it utilized white clay from the Edgefield pottery district of South Carolina (see fig. 1) to produce a variety of wares. Of this there can be no doubt. But speculation concerning what exactly the company made began to swell during the next century until, like sightings of UFOs and sea monsters, it burst beyond the bounds of reason. Nowadays, any piece of pottery or porcelain impressed or stamped with the letters "S.P. Co." is apt to be offered for sale by dealers and auction houses as an authentic product of the South Carolina company, despite the fact that there is little basis for the attribution.

The first such questionable object to find its way into a museum was a Rebekah at the Well<sup>1</sup> earthenware teapot in the Ceramics and Glass Collection of the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History, where it was attributed to the Southern Porcelain Company. It is 4½ inches high and covered with a mottled brown, green, and dark red glaze. Impressed on its bottom in fancy serifed lettering are "FIREPROOF" and "S.P. Co." with a little ditto mark under the raised lower case "o." Over the years this one teapot, more than any other object, fueled the belief by curators and collectors that all relief-decorated earthenwares marked "S.P. Co." had been made by the Southern Porcelain Company.



i. Detail from the Isaac Boles map of 1871, showing the old Edgefield District and the Southern Porcelain Company buildings at Kaolin, below Bath, South Carolina. Courtesy of the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. MRF 21, 589.

In museums across the country, labels began to appear on a succession of Rockingham-glazed tablewares, including a water pitcher with an anchor and chain on either side (fig. 2); a teapot with a seated Chinaman holding a fan, faced by another smoking an elaborate pipe, his back to a stack of tea canisters topped by a tall teapot (fig. 3); and, less commonly, a so-called medallion teapot with a wreath enclosing the bust of a man who might be George Washington. They were impressed "S P Co =" or "S P Co" on their undersides in plainer, sans-serif letters (fig. 4).

As my wife Diana and I examined a number of these objects in institutions across the eastern United States, the more we saw, the more our suspicions grew concerning their origins. Over a period of some twenty years, we had traveled through the South in search of rare ceramics, in particular some piece of porcelain bearing the mark



2. Rockingham-glazed water pitcher with anchor and chain decoration, earthenware, bearing the impressed mark in bottom: "S P Co =", HOA 9". *Private collection; photograph Jay A. Lewis.*

of the Southern Porcelain Company. We pleaded to be pointed at any museum or private collection where such a treasure might be housed and made it clear to every local dealer or picker we met that we would pay handsomely for even a translucent sherd with the company mark. We heard many legends of "something seen by somebody sometime back," but beyond that, silence.

Both of us were familiar with what had been made by earlier and contemporary porcelain companies in America, such as the Tucker works in Philadelphia (1827–1838) and the factories of Charles Cartlidge (1848–1856) and William Boch and Brothers (1852–1857) on Long Island in Greenpoint, New York. But as far as we knew, none of these factories had produced Rockingham ware. On the other hand, the United States Pottery Company at Bennington, Vermont (1853–1858), had made both Rockingham ware and porcelain,

3. Rockingham-glazed teapot with Chinese decoration and notched foot rim, earthenware, impressed mark on bottom "S P. Co =". HOA 6<sup>3</sup>/8".  
*Private collection;*  
*photograph Jay A.*  
*Lewis.*



but never called itself a "porcelain company." Why, then were the only marked survivals to be found from the Southern Porcelain Company pieces of Rockingham-glazed pottery?

In addition, the relief designs on these Rockingham tablewares marked "S.P. Co." were similar to or the same as those on products of several eastern manufactories in a date context of the late 1870s and even the 1880s, long after the Southern Porcelain Company stopped making either pottery or porcelain. The distinctively daubed colors, and especially the use of red on the Smithsonian's Rebekah at the Well teapot, were characteristics we had only encountered on late nineteenth-century pottery from South Amboy and Mattawan, New Jersey. We had even seen turn-of-the-century semi-vitreous porcelain and ironstone, bearing a variety of black-stamped or transfer-printed "S.P. Co." marks on their bottoms, that had been attributed to the South Carolina firm. Therefore, so that suffering collectors might be healed of and future generations protected from "S. P. Co." fever, this reassessment of the factory and its wares has been undertaken.



4. The "S.P. Co. = " mark, most commonly found on Rockingham-glazed earthenware.  
*Private collection; photograph Jay A. Lewis.*

#### THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTHERN PORCELAIN COMPANY

To date, no one has improved on the history of the Southern Porcelain Company written by Edwin AtLee Barber for the first edition of *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, published in 1893. His account, prepared at a time when many of the old potters and managers were still alive, may be regarded as a canon against which to measure the statements and theories of others.<sup>2</sup>

According to Barber, the Southern Porcelain Company of Kaolin,

South Carolina, was founded in 1856 by one William H. Farrar, previously a stockholder in the United States Pottery Company of Bennington, Vermont. Farrar had the backing of prominent Georgia citizens from nearby Augusta and elsewhere, including Alexander H. Stevens, who later served as vice president of the Confederacy. To construct the factory, Farrar brought with him brick masons from Vermont, who erected "the most approved kilns of that day," and Anson Peeler, a master carpenter, who had built the Bennington pottery.

Barber states that the first manager of the company, an inept Englishman, was quickly replaced by Josiah Jones, "a skillful designer and competent potter" who had previously modeled for his brother-in-law, Charles Cartlidge, at Greenpoint. What Barber describes as "very fair porcelain and good white granite and cream-colored wares" were produced but without commercial success, largely because Farrar insisted on the exclusive use of local clays. In fall 1857, Farrar appealed to his former colleagues at Bennington and arranged for Decius W. Clark, a brilliant scientist who was considered one of the foremost stoneware potters in the United States, "to take the South Carolina potteries in hand." In February 1858, the senior Clark returned to Vermont and was replaced in Kaolin by his son Lyman W. Clark, who took charge of the preparation of bodies and glazes.<sup>3</sup> Barber reports that in 1860, manufacture of the finer grades of ware was discontinued.

At the outbreak of the Civil War the company was reorganized as the Southern Porcelain Manufacturing Company, which, Barber states, "is said to have gone into the extensive manufacture of porcelain and pottery telegraph insulators for the Confederate Government." Figure 5 illustrates a firebrick from this period. The factory also produced earthenware water pipes, in the face of the inexorably turning tide of the war against the southern cause, in its efforts to remain solvent.<sup>4</sup>

In 1864, an apparent infusion of capital and an article in an Augusta newspaper suggest yet another reorganization.<sup>5</sup> *The Daily*



5. Firebrick made by the Southern Porcelain Manufacturing Company, c. 1861–1864. LOA 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>". Private collection. MRF 21,530.

*Chronicle and Sentinel* reported on 22 April 1864 that the company's agency in Augusta was at 189 Broad Street under the management of J. E. Marshall, and that the factory was currently making "insulators, battery jars, porous cups, fire brick, retorts, jars, gallipots, furniture for hospitals and chamber purposes, articles for domestic use, plates, cups, saucers, pitchers."

On the night of Thursday, 13 October 1864, a fire was discovered issuing from the engine room of the Southern Porcelain factory. Despite efforts to extinguish the blaze, it spread quickly and destroyed the entire works. The 15 October *Daily Chronicle and Sentinel* estimated the loss at \$200,000 and said the insurance amounted only to \$25,000.<sup>6</sup> If the speculations of W. H. Farrar in the Edgefield District had not already ended with the outbreak of the war or in one of the company's reorganizations, they most assuredly went up in smoke on that fateful night.

#### THE ELUSIVE W. H. FARRAR

Just who was W. H. Farrar? Mary E. Davison, in her article on William H. Farrar in the March 1939 issue of *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, said he was a potter who had established a successful Rockingham and stoneware manufactory in Geddes, New York, in the 1840s, sold out in the late 1850s, and went south to found the Southern Porcelain Company.<sup>1</sup> Yet the question remained, how could such a successful man go to South Carolina and self-destruct?

In the 1850 U.S. census for Geddes, New York, W. H. Farrar and his Stoneware Pottery appear at the bottom of page 486 with his name misspelled "Farrier." At the time, Farrar was thirty-seven years old and had been born in Vermont. His wife Jane was listed as a native of Canada, and his only son, George, aged five, had been born in New York.

In the 1860 census for the Edgefield district of South Carolina, W. H. Farrar is listed as a "Mechanic," forty years old and from New Hampshire. His wife, Laura, had been born in Florida. Both their fourteen-year-old daughter, also named Laura, and their twelve-year-old son, George P. Farrar, had been born in New Hampshire.

Allowing for the ten-year difference between the census reports, the W. H. Farrar of Geddes was seven years older than the Farrar of Edgefield, which settles the matter once and for all. These were two different men. Barber had clearly stated in his book that the W. H. Farrar who went to South Carolina was not a practical potter, but later writers chose to disregard that description.

Both W. H. Farrars had descended from Jacob Farrar, who arrived in Lancaster, Massachusetts, from England around 1658, married ten years later, and was killed by Indians in 1675; the last ancestor they had in common was Jacob's son, George (see Appendix I). Three generations later, most of the family was still living around Concord, Massachusetts, or New Ipswich, New Hampshire, where the men were employed as doctors, clergymen, and gentleman farmers; around the turn of the eighteenth century, three sons of the minister Stephen "Priest" Farrar decided to become potters and went to Ver-

mont. Reverend Farrar, a grandson of George, had been a classmate of John Adams at Harvard and more than a hundred years later was remembered as "Pastor Patriot Counsellor" for his role in the Revolution. His eldest son, Isaac B. Farrar, established a pottery in Fairfax, Vermont, and died there in 1838. His numerous children, all raised in the potting profession, carried their skills across New England and into upper New York State and Canada. Samuel Farrar also moved to the Fairfax area, and Caleb Farrar founded a pottery in Middlebury, Vermont. W. H. Farrar of Geddes, New York, was doubtless a son of one of these three men.<sup>5</sup>

The W. H. Farrar who founded the Southern Porcelain Company was William Henry, son of physician George Farrar, who was in turn the second son of Humphrey Farrar of New Ipswich. He was born in Derry, New Hampshire, on 24 February 1820, married Laura C. Jones on 4 July 1843, and according to a memoir of the Farrar family published in 1853, was then a merchant, living in Boston.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly enough, there was another W. H. Farrar in Boston at the same time, William Henry's cousin William Humphrey Farrar, a lawyer, or "counsellor" as he was called in the 1852 Boston City Directory. He was the son of William Farrar, fifth son of Humphrey Farrar. So by 1852 three W. H. Farrars could be accounted for—and there would be more.

#### FARRAR, BENNINGTON, AND SOUTH CAROLINA CLAY

In 1852 William Henry Farrar, the Boston merchant, became financially involved with the Bennington Pottery, a company in the throes of reorganization and approaching its pinnacle of glory as it prepared an impressive display for the New York Crystal Palace Exhibition. Unfortunately, the pottery's dynamic founder, Christopher Webber Fenton, and his chief financial backer, attorney A. P. Lyman, had become encumbered with liabilities beyond their means; therefore, on 10 April 1852, they deeded to Lyman Harrington and Calvin

Park the company's assets, including real estate and a large amount of unsold ware, much of which was being kept for sale at a store in Boston. By this action, they secured their debts and remained as silent participants in the pottery's affairs.

Harrington and Park arranged with William H. Farrar to take over "possession and management" of the Boston store in order to dispose of Lyman and Fenton's unsold pottery, as well as whatever other wares that they might send to him. Farrar served as their general agent in Boston for less than a year. On 12 January 1853, business at the store was discontinued, and Harrington and Park, "by the advice and direction" of Lyman and Fenton, conveyed their assets to Farrar, O. A. Gager, and Henry Willard, who continued to carry on the "pottery business at Bennington and afterwards organized the corporation under the name of the U.S. Pottery Company."<sup>10</sup>

At the opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in New York City on 2 May, the wares of the U.S. Pottery Company made a greater impression on reporters covering the event in the following weeks than anything else displayed by manufacturers of American ceramics. Most writers praised the gaudy "flint enamel" glazes on Bennington earthenware, but some also recognized the significance of its porcelain. Kaolin had been discovered in Vermont early in the century, but only C. W. Fenton had been able to use it successfully to make porcelain, beginning around 1847. According to one contemporary publication, Fenton was using flint from Vermont and Massachusetts, feldspar from New Hampshire, and china clays from Vermont and South Carolina.<sup>11</sup> Fenton and Decius Clark had prospected in South Carolina sometime between 1847 and 1851 and located extensive deposits of porcelain clay. They had huge quantities of this material dug out, wheeled into a drying oven, and shipped north as ballast for cotton shipments, finally to be used by the Bennington pottery.<sup>12</sup>

By 1854, the U.S. Pottery Company consisted of William H. Farrar, O. A. Gager, Henry Willard, Jason Archer, and S. H. Johnson. On 9 December, however, Farrar sold his fifth share of the pottery's

assets to C. W. Fenton for \$13,000,<sup>14</sup> represented in part by the transferral of approximately 26 acres of land near Bath, South Carolina, containing a kaolin bed, the deed to which was held by A. P. Lyman. A value of \$3,500, placed on the property by Decius Clark, was agreed upon by both parties. By the contract of sale, Farrar held a mortgage on Fenton's fifth share until this property was turned over to him. He also had a letter from Fenton promising to procure and provide him with "a good and valid warranty deed," executed according to the laws of the state of South Carolina. Otherwise, he could foreclose the mortgage.<sup>15</sup>

Dreams of making porcelain had inflamed the minds of men for centuries, and in the eighteenth century, a white clay known to the Cherokee as *unaker* caused speculators to comb the countryside in and around their lands. Andrew Duche, a potter working in Charleston, South Carolina, and then Savannah, Georgia, had prospected there and up the Savannah River as far as New Windsor, close to Kaolin, South Carolina. In 1743 he sailed for England and may or may not have taken with him specimens of the kaolin that was later exported to the Porcelain Manufactory at Bow.<sup>16</sup>

Although others might have previously used South Carolina clay as an ingredient for porcelain, Farrar had seen with his own eyes what could be made from it at Bennington. He was convinced that Fenton's clay would be the foundation for his path to fame and fortune. So, in 1856, after preliminary investigations, he packed up his family and headed south, only to become almost immediately embroiled in a dispute over ownership of the clay bed that would endure for as long as he remained in Kaolin.

Farrar's property, containing the kaolin bed, had formerly been owned by D. J. Walker and A. J. Rambo. It was described as follows: "Beginning at the S.E. corner of said lot and the North line of land owned by Charles Sampson, thence running westwardly on the North line of said Sampson's land sixty four rods; thence on right angles easterly sixty four rods to lands owned by Charles Powell, thence on Powell's west line sixty four rods to the place of beginning,

making a square piece of land, twenty five acres and ninety-six rods."<sup>16</sup>

On the fourth Tuesday of December 1857, Farrar filed suit in the Court of Chancery at Bennington to foreclose his mortgage on the grounds that the deed he received from Lyman represented only half of the property, namely that which belonged to D. J. Walker; the other "undivided half" continued to be owned by A. J. Rambo. Farrar claimed he had only become fully aware of the situation while in the process of selling the land on 5 June 1856 to a stock company which planned to build a pottery on the property, and added that when Rambo heard of these plans, he made Farrar pay \$2,500 in order to obtain his half. Farrar said he had repeatedly attempted to get the U.S. Pottery Company to reimburse him for the money and was refused. He therefore took the position that since he had not been conveyed a deed with a clear title to the entire property, he was empowered by law to foreclose. Subpoenas were delivered to C. W. Fenton and to the U.S. Pottery Company.

Various countersuits were filed, the earliest alleging that Fenton had never promised to deliver to Farrar a full and perfect title to the clay bed or to guarantee or be held responsible in any way for the validity of the title conveyed. A. P. Lyman admitted that his deed had been conveyed by Walker alone, but said Walker and Rambo were partners and acting together in the transaction, and that he had negotiated to purchase the whole clay bed with Walker, who was fully authorized to receive payment and to represent Rambo, who was to provide title to his half when he returned from a trip. Lyman stated that the deed was not only in order, but that he had even traveled to New York to make sure its transferral was executed properly according to the laws of the state of South Carolina. He said Farrar had accepted the deed and at the time instructed his attorney to void the mortgage.<sup>17</sup>

On 8 May 1858, all pottery making ceased at the U.S. Pottery Company, and following the company's failure, Fenton and Decius Clark, possibly together with modeler Daniel Greatbatch, went south to see what was going on in South Carolina.<sup>18</sup>

Later that year, in a continuing response to Farrar's legal action, the U.S. Pottery Company's representatives attempted to shift the blame onto Fenton by claiming that he had originally hired an attorney to prepare a countersuit against Farrar, but that "Fenton, being now entirely irresponsible and insolvent and having gone to Bath, South Carolina and is there employed by the said Farrar or is in some way connected or associated in business with him," had withdrawn his countersuit and was instructing his attorney to try and obtain a decree in favor of Farrar. Further, they charged that Farrar's suit was "in reality prosecuted in the interest and for the benefit of said Fenton upon fraudulent collusion with Farrar" for the benefit of either or both.

Fenton and Clark had without a doubt originally intended to join up with Farrar, but after sizing up the potential of the Southern Porcelain Company within weeks after their arrival, they changed their minds. The potter Silas R. Wilcox, who moved from Bennington to Kaolin in December 1858, recalled in later years that when he arrived Fenton was still there, but soon afterward "went away, ostensibly to get supplies, etc., and never returned." Decius Clark left also, but sent his son Lyman W. Clark to South Carolina.<sup>19</sup> Fenton and Decius Clark extended their search for a suitable pottery site to Illinois, finally settling on Peoria, where they founded the American Pottery Company late in 1859.<sup>20</sup>

Eventually, the various countersuits against Farrar were combined into a single action by the U.S. Pottery Company, which was signed on 24 September 1860 by O. A. Gager, "Director and Formerly Treasurer and Agent" of the company. In this, the company stated that Farrar was actually indebted to Fenton for more than the \$2,500 he claimed Fenton owed him. It was alleged that when Harrington and Park closed their Boston store, Farrar's books showed debts amounting to \$7,000, owed by persons whose identities Farrar had refused to divulge despite repeated requests for this information by the company. Consequently, on 24 April 1857, A. P. Lyman and Harrington and Park had legally transferred to Fenton all claims they had to Farrar's debts. As Farrar was thereby indebted to Fenton for more than

the \$2,500 he had sought, the company deemed it unnecessary to honor his claim. Moreover, they argued that unless Farrar was prepared to settle his affairs, his suit should be dismissed.<sup>21</sup>

On 10 June 1865, in the absence of any further depositions by Farrar, who by that time was no longer in South Carolina, or by Fenton, who had died three days earlier in Joliet, Illinois,<sup>22</sup> the court, meeting in Manchester, Vermont, dismissed Farrar's suit without prejudice to Farrar, and the U.S. Pottery Company was ordered to pay the court costs. The \$2,500 claimed by Farrar was applied to his debt to Fenton, and the U.S. Pottery Company was empowered to recover its costs from Farrar, taxed at \$114.71.<sup>23</sup>

#### FARRAR'S MANUFACTURE OF PORCELAIN AND EARTHENWARE

The scarcity of surviving examples of porcelain made by the Southern Porcelain Company may be blamed on a number of factors. In addition to the legal difficulties faced from the beginning by the Southern Porcelain Company, the country was in the midst of an economic downturn that contributed to the cessation of most other porcelain manufacturing in America by 1857. Then too, "Promoter Farrar," as one of the old Bennington potters called him,<sup>24</sup> had never been a potter and understood little about the practical aspects of making porcelain, despite whatever arcane information he may have been able to soak up while living in Bennington. This is why, like many American entrepreneurs who preceded him, he was seized by the mistaken notion that fine porcelain could be created from a single clay or group of clays from one location.

According to Farrar's statement above, the Southern Porcelain Company officially came into being on 5 June 1856. Then workmen began to arrive from Bennington: first carpenter Anson Peeler and his masons, and afterward potters, including mold-maker Enoch Barber who, like fifty-five-year-old Josiah Jones, had most recently been employed at Greenpoint, New York.<sup>25</sup>

At the time of the 1860 census for the Edgefield District, Peeler

and his wife, Margaret, were 39 years old. Both had been born in New York State and left home before 1846. Their fourteen-year-old daughter Mary had been born in Massachusetts, and their nine-year-old son Irvey in Vermont. If, as Edwin AtLee Barber states, Peeler had built the Bennington pottery, it would have been when he was in his late twenties.

Peeler and the masons would have taken about two months to construct the pottery and kilns, so it is doubtful whether ware of any kind could have been made before fall 1856. If, in addition, the first attempts were failures and Josiah Jones was brought in quickly after these abortive efforts, we are left with a period of about three years during which fine porcelain could have been made while Farrar was in charge at Kaolin.

The only fully marked example of tableware known today from this period is a 7-inch-high molded creamer (fig. 6), which is not porcelain but a sophisticated whiteware. Impressed on the bottom is a diamond-shaped cartouche that surrounds an American eagle holding a cluster of arrows in its talons, with the words "S.P. / COMPANY" above and "KAOLIN / S.C." below (fig. 6a). Its embossed leaf design somewhat resembles that of a "graniteware" toilet set produced at Bennington<sup>26</sup>—so perhaps the vessel should more properly be described as a mouth ewer—but until it is proved to be part of a larger set, it must be considered a creamer. It was made from a mold, perhaps by Enoch Barber.



6. Fully marked Southern Porcelain Company creamer, whiteware, c. 1856–1860. HOA 6<sup>11/16</sup>".  
*Private collection; photograph by Jay A. Lewis.*



6a. Detail of the mark on creamer in figure 6, reading "S.P. / COMPANY / KAO LIN / S. C." *Photograph by Jay A. Lewis.*

The only marked example of the company's porcelain found to date is a broken insulator with a clear lead glaze (fig. 7), impressed underneath with a shield containing the words "S P / COMPANY / KAOLIN / SC" (fig. 7a). It was discovered in an excavation in Richmond, Virginia, along with other unmarked insulators from the Civil War period.<sup>27</sup> A marked insulator in "brown stoneware" had been acquired by Edwin AtLee Barber for the Philadelphia Museum but was deaccessioned in 1954.<sup>28</sup> Both are in what collectors call a "teakettle" or "teapot" shape. Barber was probably unaware of any other Southern Porcelain Company mark than what was stamped on the Philadelphia Museum's insulator. It is the only one cited in his book, *Marks of American Potters*.<sup>29</sup>

For attribution purposes, any fully marked object can be regarded as "definite"—the creamer, once again, being all that is known in tableware.

However, Barber pictured two other pieces of tableware, with no indication of whether or not they were marked, that have strong histories linking them to the Southern Porcelain Company in Kaolin. A Parian "wheat-head" syrup pitcher was purchased at the factory by Mrs. John S. Porcher of Eutawville, great-granddaughter of Richard Champion, the famous English porcelain maker who had emigrated to Camden, South Carolina in the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> A porcelain water pitcher with a corn or maize pattern had a history of being presented to Mrs. Edward Willis of Charleston when she visited Kaolin in 1861.<sup>31</sup> Since the whereabouts of these documentary examples are presently unknown, and without them to use for reference or comparison, similar objects found in the South cannot be positively attributed to the Southern Porcelain Company. They may only be considered "probables."

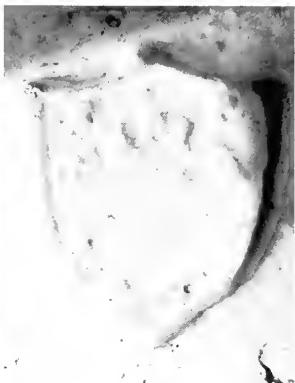
According to Barber, molds for both pitchers were brought from



7



7a



7b

Greenpoint, New York, by their designer, Josiah Jones.<sup>32</sup> The corn-pattern pitcher could have been made as early as 1849 by Charles Cartlidge & Co., which produced them in at least six sizes, later by the Boch factory in Greenpoint, and by others.<sup>33</sup> Corn pitchers are by no means uncommon and when faced with a tableful of white porcelain corn pitchers, it is difficult to tell which was made where or by whom. They can also be found with a Rockingham glaze, and a glazed redware version is in the collection of the Henry Ford Museum.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 8 shows a large porcelain corn pitcher that was found in the South. It has a greenish translucency similar to Boch porcelain, but an unglazed exterior, unknown in Greenpoint pitchers. The bottom of its branch handle sticks out beyond the body and terminates in a vertical slice as if cut by garden shears, a characteristic also seen on the corn pitcher illustrated by Barber. Unfortunately, Barber did not give the size of the pitcher in his book; it may be smaller than the one in figure 8, since the mold details are markedly different.

7. Fully marked Southern Porcelain Company insulator, porcelain with traces of clear lead glaze. HOA 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>", WOA 4", base, 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>". (top). *Private collection. MRF S-23, 185.*

7a. Underside of insulator, showing the mark.

7b. Detail of the mark on the insulator shown in figure 7, reading "S P / COMPANY / KAOLIN / S C." Due to an optical illusion the mark appears to be raised, but it is actually impressed.



8. Corn or maize pattern water pitcher, porcelain, with unusual biscuit exterior and glazed interior, probably made by the Southern Porcelain Company, c. 1856–1860. HOA 10". *Private collection. MRF-27,529*

However, any 10-inch high porcelain corn pitcher with a cut-off handle terminal and the ears of corn in the same exact position as in figure 8 is probably a product of the Southern Porcelain Company. The same would apply to a smaller pitcher with details matching the one shown by Barber.

The wheat-head syrup pitcher in Parian ware (fig. 9) presents a different problem. Parian bodies are so alike that in the absence of a maker's mark it is impossible to distinguish between American and English Parian ware, much less between that of Bennington and the Southern Porcelain Company.<sup>35</sup> The design was probably inspired by

a pattern called Ceres, registered by Edward Walley of Staffordshire in 1851, and although its mold may have come from Greenpoint, this little syrup pitcher represents the most sophisticated form believed to have been made at Kaolin. It is extremely rare and unlike anything in Richard Carter Barret's *Bennington Pottery and Porcelain*.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, after taking provenance into consideration, any example must be thought of as a "probable."

A recently discovered account of a visit to the factory, adds another object to the list of "probables" and gives us a glimpse of the Farrar family at home. Helen Zubly Clarke Bush (1826–1897) was a widow living in Augusta, Georgia. In the fall of 1859, while recuperating from a long illness, she made a trip to the Southern Porcelain Company factory. On Saturday, 3 September, she wrote in her diary:

I went today to Kaolin in the Edgefield District, South Carolina. A few days ago, as it would seem, the old chalk hills were a part of nature's



9. Wheat-head syrup pitcher, Parian ware, probably made by the Southern Porcelain Company, c. 1856–1860. HOA 4½". Collection of the Newark Museum, Newark, N.J., acc. 15.147. Photograph the Newark Museum/Art Resource, New York.

quietness. Now, due to man's inventive genius, the chalk is molded into pitchers, plates, bowls, and other articles too numerous to mention.

My kind and attentive friend Mr. Bridwell carried me there. We started about 10 o'clock in the morning and we had a very pleasant ride. It had been four years since I had crossed the Augusta bridge. There had been great improvements since I had been that road. . . .

Mr. Bridwell pointed out the chimneys of the manufactory to me. They were peeping out among the trees. We arrived at the manufactory, went through the lower floor, seeing the rough pieces of chalk. Then was to be seen large lumps of chalk of the consistancy of putty. Then again we saw the chalk, molded into shapes ready for the kiln. The chimneys run through the factory like large pillars. The kilns have doors to them and look like dungeons that are inside old castles.

Then we walked upstairs to Mr. Farrar's office where I was introduced to a very pleasant gentleman in the person of Mr. Farrar, on every line of his face written mildness and goodness. He was pleased to see me and said to Mr. Bridwell, "So you have brought Mrs. Bush to see us."

He invited us to walk around and look at the ware which was already for sale. I saw many mugs, pitchers, goblets, bowls and pitchers, soap cups, jars and many other articles of needful domestic goods. The company was out of their nice wares, no china of much value was on hand. . . . After looking around the rooms Mr. Farrar said we must go up to the house and see Mrs. Farrar. I had seen their daughter Laura before, for she had called upon me. . . . After riding a few yards we came to Mr. Farrar's house. There is quite a large space before the house, which is built in the style of an English cottage. Instead of windows there are glass doors opening on a large piazza. There is a large hall running through the house, with a fireplace in it. The hall is furnished like a room. There were some handsome vases upon the mantle, and a large porcelain dog with a large gilt padlock and a black chain around his neck. I like the house better than other houses that we see now. It is a very tasty house with an air of comfort and refinement about it, and such a beautiful cosy little parlor area. . . . Mrs. Farrar is a very friendly and entertaining lady. We had a very interesting conversation about the Battle of Bennington. Before coming to the South they resided in Bennington, Vermont.

Mr. Bridwell went to the manufactory and stayed with Mr. Farrar until dinner time, then both Mr. Farrar and himself returned to dinner. We had a very nice dinner and the best of cold water, better than ice water.

After dinner Mr. B went to Bath on some business. He returned after a few hours.

Laura and myself gathered some acorns and we talked about many things. Then she went to the Church with me and I found a very neat comfortable church capable of holding 200 persons. There was a handsome Bible and Prayer Books made a present to the church by Mrs. Gardner and her sister Mrs. Harison. . . . We returned back to the house. . . . I told Mrs. Farrar that I felt like it was hard to say goodbye. Mr. Bridwell said that we had better start. Before we left Mrs. Farrar had cake handed to us.

We called at the manufactory on our way home. Mr. Farrar gave me a pitcher with a shepherd boy with his crook and pipes with him. At his feet is lying two little lambs. On the other side of the pitcher is a country maid standing near a fence. I got a soap cup and a mug. We bade Mr. Farrar good-bye then started for dear old Augusta. . . . We got there by eight o'clock and all the home folks were glad to see me.<sup>17</sup>

Both the road traveled by Mrs. Bush and the church she visited with Laura Farrar can be clearly seen in the map illustrated in figure 1.

Mrs. Bush neglected to mention whether the pitcher she had been given was porcelain or whiteware. Very few shepherd and shepherdess water pitchers are known. A porcelain example in the collection of the Charleston Museum (fig. 10) could have been modeled by Josiah Jones while he was still at Greenpoint, because another pitcher in a private collection that has been examined



10. Shepherd and shepherdess water pitcher, porcelain, probably made by the Southern Porcelain Company, c. 1856–1860. *Collection of the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C., acc. 32.122.1. MRF 5-21.233.*

resembles Boch porcelain, a bit greasy to the touch and slightly greenish in its translucency. The design, however, is in the English manner and almost eighteenth century in appearance, unlike anything else attributable to Cartlidge or the Bochs. In fact, one wonders whether such a naive, pastoral design would have been thought suitable or saleable in New York City. On the other hand, it may have appealed to the landed gentry of the antebellum South. Any example of the shepherd and shepherdess water pitcher should be considered as probably made by the Southern Porcelain Company.

To the products mentioned above, it is only possible to add Edwin AtLee Barber's claim that "Rockingham pitchers and spittoons of ornate form were made in the early days." No other forms can be reasonably ascribed to the Southern Porcelain Company while managed by W. H. Farrar.

#### THE IMPACT OF THE CIVIL WAR ON THE SOUTHERN PORCELAIN COMPANY

By 1860, less and less pottery was being made at the factory. War clouds were gathering, and workmen who were immigrants or had grown up in the North became uneasy as talk of secession and diatribes against the Union swirled around their heads. It was in South Carolina, after all, that the incident occurred—the firing on Fort Sumter on 9 January 1861—that set the whole conflict in motion. Neither Josiah Jones nor Enoch Barber appears in the Edgefield Census of 1860; Jones had already left South Carolina for Trenton, New Jersey.<sup>38</sup> (See Appendix II.)

The onset of the Civil War had a devastating effect on potteries in both the North and the South as young men rushed to enlist in support of one side or the other. Former Bennington men, Albert Cushman and Jerome Seymour, both of whom were pressers, "joined the Southern army," and Seymour was killed at the Battle of Fair Oaks, Virginia, on 1 June 1862.<sup>39</sup>

W. H. Farrar may well have returned with his family to the North

before the reorganization of the company in 1861, but precisely where he went is unclear. Ceramic historian John Spargo said he became "engaged in the pottery industry in Philadelphia,"<sup>40</sup> but his name could not be found in the city directories of the late 1860s or early 1870s. Ceramic historian John Ramsay claimed that Farrar had previously worked in Jersey City, and indeed a W. H. Farrar was listed in the 1870 Federal Census for Jersey City, but he was a "Watch Factory Hand" newly arrived from England.<sup>41</sup>

From 1861 to 1864, the Southern Porcelain Manufacturing Company struggled to survive alongside a newly created pottery near Bath, South Carolina, known first as the Palmetto Fire Brick Works and afterward as the Bath Fire Brick Works.<sup>42</sup> When the factory at Kaolin burned in 1864, Joseph Wheeler was probably the company president.<sup>43</sup>

#### POSTWAR PORCELAIN AND EARTHENWARE PRODUCTION AT KAOLIN

More than a year later, with the war over, a new porcelain manufactory began to rise from the ashes of the old Farrar enterprise and two articles about the venture appeared in the *Edgefield Advertiser*. The first, entitled "A Mine of Wealth," dated 19 September 1866, was hardly more than a puff for the company. It listed the officers, "all of Augusta," as R. B. Bullock, president; J. E. Marshall, secretary; and G. Schaub, general superintendent, and noted that "the work of introduction and manufacture is only in its incipiency." The second, on 10 October, only three weeks later, raved about a kaolin tea set that had been presented by R. B. Bullock to General M. W. Gary. "Everybody knows who General Gary is," proclaimed the article, "but who is Mr. Bullock?"

Southerners would certainly have known that Martin Witherspoon Gary, born in Cokesbury, South Carolina, in 1831, had commanded the last troops to leave the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. Cutting his way out after Lee's surrender at

Appomattox, Gary had helped escort Jefferson Davis and his cabinet south, the members having their last meeting at the home of General Gary's mother in Cokesbury.<sup>44</sup> Today, however, information is more easily found about Rufus Brown Bullock, who has been profiled in most encyclopedias of American biography.

Bullock was born in Bethlehem, Albany County, New York, on 28 March 1834 and graduated from Albion Academy in 1850. After exploring various pursuits, he was sent in 1859 and 1860 to organize the business of the Adams Express Company in the South Atlantic states. He established a headquarters in Augusta, Georgia, formed the Southern Express Company, and became one of its managers. During the war, he continued this activity under the direction of the Confederate government, creating railroads and telegraph lines—which may help explain his interest in a company that made insulators. Bullock was associated with the organization of the First National Bank of Georgia and was elected president of the Macon and Augusta Railroad. In 1868 he was elected governor of the state of Georgia, after which, it must be assumed, he no longer concerned himself with the operation of the porcelain works at Kaolin.<sup>45</sup> But the tea set he presented to General Gary in 1866 was described as "durable in quality and very elegant in tint and beauty of finish." Unfortunately we have no hint as to whether it was porcelain or whiteware.

Also during this postwar period, according to Edwin AtLee Barber, "Cream-pots, pitchers, etc., in white ware and porcelain, with raised leaves and imitation of wicker or basket work, were made to some extent." While the reference to raised leaves suggests the design on the marked whiteware creamer shown in figure 7, which is attributed to the Farrar period, it is highly unlikely that a southern company would be using an American eagle as part of its mark on the heels of the Confederate surrender. Basketweave pitchers, however, were being made by other American potteries at that time. The account book of modeler Ralph Scragg, of East Liverpool, Ohio, indicates that in fall 1869, he delivered molds for five sizes of bas-



11. Basketweave pattern syrup pitcher, Parian ware, of the type represented by the sherd in figure 12. This example, made by Frederick Dallas of Cincinnati, Ohio, c. 1869, is impressed "F. DALLAS" in the foot rim. HOA 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". *Ceramics and Glass Collection, Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.* acc. 75.40. Photograph J. G. Stradling.

ketweave pitchers (fig. 11) to Frederick Dallas, who was making Parian ware in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Among a group of whiteware sherds picked off the ground at the Southern Porcelain Company site in 1991 by Edgefield potter Stephen Ferrell was a single example of porcelain (fig. 12), molded in a basketweave pattern. Its presence suggests that the company did produce sheer, translucent ceramics and did indeed make basketweave pitchers in the later period, as Barber claimed. Other sherds gathered were parts of common white ironstone tablewares, of the kind produced by many American potteries for restaurants and hotels.



12. Sherd from basketweave pitcher, porcelain, found at the site of the Southern Porcelain Company, probably made c. 1866–1870. HOA 3", WOA 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>". Private collection. MRF 23.470.

Little can be learned about the factory's final years, but if Rockingham-glazed pottery marked "S.P. Co." was actually made by the Southern Porcelain Company, it had to have been after the war and before 1877, around which time the company was sold to McNamee & Company of New York, a firm concerned with marketing clays rather than the making of pottery or porcelain.<sup>46</sup>

Following the war, northern as well as southern potteries took a while to resume production. Many young potters had been killed. New designs were slow to come onto the market, and for some reason American potters, unlike American glassmakers, were reluctant to make use of design patents. Consequently, Edwin Bennett's Rebekah at the Well teapot, created in Baltimore in 1851, was copied by countless companies and became one of the most popular pieces of American pottery ever made.<sup>47</sup> Rebekah teapots are found with both the plain "S P. Co = " mark and the fancier mark including the word "FIREPROOF."

As stated earlier in this article, other Rockingham-glazed objects commonly found with "S P. Co =" marks include pitchers decorated with an anchor and chain and teapots in Chinese and medallion patterns. All are associated with designs originating in the 1870s and most were made by a wide variety of potteries.

Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery, founded in Trenton, New Jersey, in 1876,<sup>48</sup> produced both an anchor pitcher and a Rebekah at the Well teapot (fig. 13). The teapot is marked on the bottom "FIREPROOF / J. MAYER / TRENTON" (fig. 13a).<sup>49</sup> Fireproof ware, for use in or on top of the stove, had been advertised as early as 1833, but the practice of impressing the word itself into the bottoms of kitchen crockery did not take place until much later.<sup>50</sup> The word may have first appeared on English Rockingham and yellow ware, especially articles from Derbyshire, but the earliest use of "FIRE-

PROOF" in an American mark was by J. E. Jeffords & Company of Philadelphia in association with a patent awarded to Nathaniel Plympton of Boston on 28 June 1870. When teapots were placed on top of a cast iron stove, they tended to crack as the bottom rim came into contact with the extremely hot surface. To eliminate this problem, Plympton devised "as a new or improved manufacture, an earthenware tea-pot, having its bottom notched or grooved."<sup>51</sup>

John E. Jeffords, who had obviously received a license to utilize the Plympton patent, was making Rebekah at the Well teapots with notched foot rings by 1874.<sup>52</sup> He also made Rockingham-glazed



13. Rockingham-glazed Rebekah at the Well teapot, made at the Arsenal Pottery, 1876–1879. HOA 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Collection of the Newark Museum, Newark, N.J., acc. 48.442. *Photograph the Newark Museum/Art Resource, New York.*



13a. Impressed mark on the underside of fig. 13, "FIREPROOF / J. MAYER / TRENTON." *Photograph the Newark Museum/Art Resource, New York.*

kitchen wares with raised pads on the bottoms, which was another way of approaching the problem. A Jeffords ad in the *Crockery and Glass Journal* of 27 April 1876 illustrates a "Basket Pattern" teapot. Also shown are Chinese and medallion teapots, both of which have "S.P. Co ="-marked counterparts. Since all of the teapots impressed "S.P. Co." have either raised pads or notched bottoms, none could have been made before the 1870s, which calls into serious question whether any could have been produced at Kaolin, South Carolina.

Looking back to discover how "S.P. Co." marked earthenwares ever came to be attributed to the Southern Porcelain Company, one finds that the earliest connection may have been made by Edwin AtLee Barber's widow or by Freeman's Auction Gallery in Philadelphia, when putting together the catalogue for Barber's estate sale, a year after his death in December 1916.<sup>53</sup>

Lot 339 in the catalogue was a pitcher, 10½ inches in height. "Brown and Yellow Glaze, Raised Figures of Anchor on Each Side, Rope around Edge, &c. Marked 'S.P. Co.' (Southern Porcelain Co.), Kaolin, S.C." So far as can be found, no such attribution was made by Barber himself in any of his books or articles.

The questionable judgment, however, was accepted and repeated by others. In 1947, C. Jordan Thorn's *Handbook of Pottery and Porcelain Marks* was issued by the Tudor Publishing Company of New York City. It contained the plain "S P. Co =" mark attributed to the "Southern Porcelain Co., Kaolin, S.C. 1856–64."<sup>54</sup> In 1957, the Henry Ford Museum acquired a Rebekah at the Well teapot in a "green and brown glaze" with an "S.P. Co. / FIREPROOF" mark, and a brown-glazed anchor pitcher with the "S P. Co =" mark from the collection of the late George S. McKearin.<sup>55</sup> There is also in the museum a medallion teapot with the latter mark. All three objects were originally attributed to the Southern Porcelain Company.

Someone, in the years that followed the Barber estate sale, should have wondered at the number of brown pottery pieces marked "S.P. Co." in museums and private collections, especially in the North. It should have seemed at least a little bit strange that so many examples

had survived a nineteenth-century manufactory in rural South Carolina. But then, if the Southern Porcelain Company did not make the group of objects marked "S.P. Co.," with or without the word "FIREPROOF," who did?

A convincing answer is found in an article from the 9 December 1875 issue of the *Crockery and Glass Journal* on the Speeler Pottery Company of Trenton, New Jersey. Henry Speeler and James Taylor had come from East Liverpool, Ohio, to Trenton, New Jersey, in 1852. In 1860 they parted company; the former established the Henry Speeler pottery and later the Henry Speeler & Sons pottery. Following Henry Speeler's death in 1871, his sons reorganized under the name "Speeler Pottery Company" (fig. 14).<sup>56</sup>

The *Crockery and Glass Journal* article reported that the company had "the largest kilns in operation in the world" and employed "from ninety to one hundred hands." It added, "In teapots alone they have the 'Rebecca,' 'Chinese,' 'Medallion,' 'Pine-Apple,' and 'Vine,' all in new shapes."

The fact that teapots in two of these designs were advertised several months later by Jeffords, as has previously been mentioned, was

ESTABLISHED IN 1852.

**Speeler Pottery Company,**

SUCCESSORS to HENRY SPEELER & SONS,  
Manufacturers of

YELLOW, ROCKINGHAM & WHITE-LINED  
FIRE-PROOF WARE,  
TRENTON, N.J.

14. Speeler Pottery Company advertisement, listing "Fire-Proof Ware," from *Boyd's Trenton Directory*, Trenton, N.J., 1873.



15. Pair of biscuit Rebekah at the Well teapots produced by the Speeler Pottery Company of Trenton, N.J., with impressed "S.P. Co." mark on the underside. *Private collection; photograph Richard P. Goodbody.*

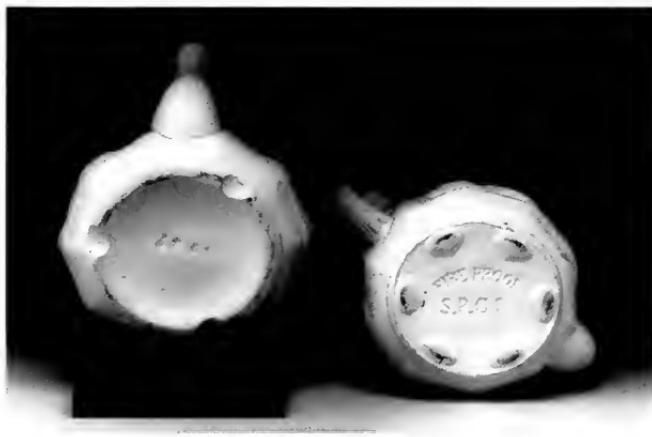
more than a coincidence. The officers of the Speeler Pottery Company, as listed in Boyd's *Trenton Directory* of 1873, were Alex Morrison, president; William F. Speeler, vice president; William Hunt, treasurer; H. A. Speeler, superintendent; and Jno E. Jeffords, secretary.

It is highly unlikely that the same "new" shapes being offered by the Speeler and Jeffords potteries in late 1875 and 1876 were also being made by the Southern Porcelain Company a year before it was sold. In fact there is no evidence, archaeological or otherwise, that any Rockingham-glazed earthenware was being made by the South Carolina company in the 1870s. On the other hand, Rockingham wares were featured by both the Jeffords and Speeler firms in their exhibits at the Philadelphia Centennial Fair in 1876. Speaking of the

teapots in the Speeler display, a *Crockery and Glass Journal* reporter noted, "That with 'Rebecca at the Well' is especially neat."<sup>57</sup>

The strongest argument against the manufacture of Rebekah teapots by the Southern Porcelain Company, has come with the recent discovery of two biscuit examples (fig. 15) impressed with each version of the "S.P. Co." mark. (fig. 15a) Found in an antiques shop in Englewood, New Jersey, the larger is  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches high and the smaller,  $6\frac{1}{8}$  inches. Since neither are glazed, they are unusable—not the sort of thing Mrs Porcher, Mrs. Willis, or Mrs. Bush would have wanted to bring home from the factory at Kaolin. Biscuit pieces of pottery are not looked upon as great treasures by the general public and seldom travel far from their place of origin.

Any possibility that the fancier "FIREPROOF" mark might have appeared on Rebekah teapots made by the Southern Porcelain Company, while the simpler sans-serif mark was employed by the Speeler firm, is dispelled by an examination of the wares themselves. Both teapots were fashioned distinctively, in direct imitation of the Bennett original, indicating that the molds for both were created by the same hand. The lines of each two-piece mold run vertically to the

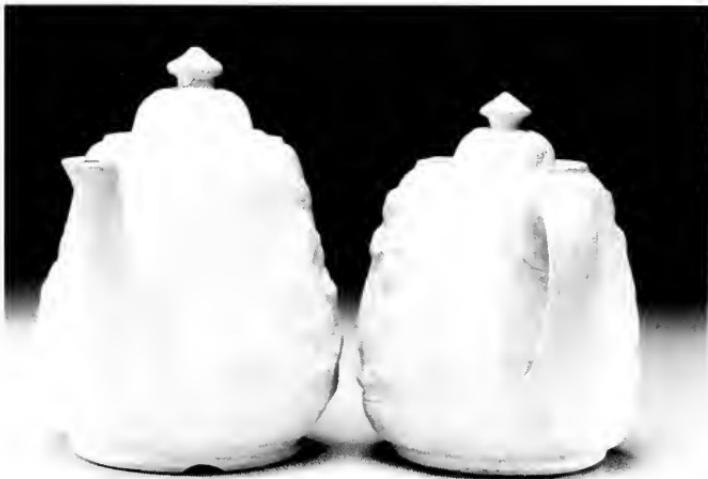


15a. Marks  
on the  
teapots in  
fig. 15.  
*Photograph*  
*Richard P.*  
*Goodbody.*

sides of the spout and handle instead of beneath them as is usually the case. (fig. 15b) It requires a powerful imagination to think that either of these two teapots came to Englewood from South Carolina rather than from nearby Trenton, New Jersey.

The conclusion must therefore be faced that brown earthenware pitchers and teapots found with either the fancy or plain "S.P. Co." marks were made by the Speeler Pottery Company of Trenton, New Jersey, between 1871 and 1879 before the pottery was sold to James Carr of New York City.

This leaves to be considered only the numerous porcelain and ironstone tablewares stamped with various marks incorporating the letters "S.P. Co." Generally, the shapes of these objects do not conform to any that were fashionable prior to 1877; the marks are therefore more likely to be those of later firms such as the Steubenville Pottery or the Sebring Pottery Company of Ohio.



15b. Mold  
details on the  
teapots in fig. 15.  
*Photograph*  
*Richard P.*  
*Goodbody*

A final word of caution to anyone encountering a piece of earthenware marked "S.C.P. Co." (fig. 16). This is the mark of the South Carolina Pottery Company, which was in operation during the 1880s near Miles Mill, some seven miles to the north of Kaolin. To date, no intact specimen from this pottery has been reported.

What remains, then, that can be reasonably attributed to the Southern Porcelain Company? Without question: a creamer with leaves in relief (fig. 6), a basketweave sherd (fig. 12), and some marked insulators. Probably: certain porcelain corn pitchers, a Parian sheaf of wheat syrup pitcher, a porcelain shepherd and shepherdess pitcher, and any basketweave pitcher matching the aforementioned sherd.

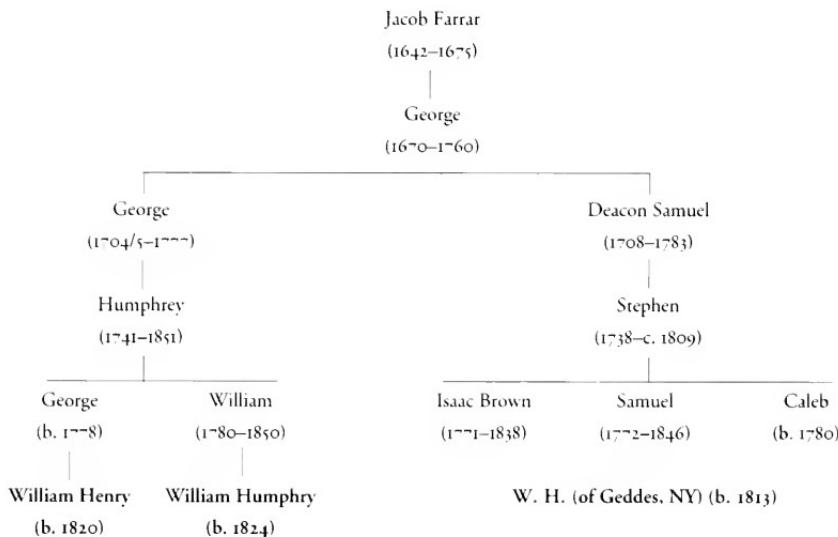
On the basis of the above reassessment, it becomes obvious that most of the products of the Southern Porcelain Company were never marked. While previously unidentified examples of the factory's pottery and porcelain may yet come to light, it is advisable for collectors to follow a simple rule of thumb: If it is marked "S.P. Co." without "Kaolin, S.C.," it was *not* made by the Southern Porcelain Company.

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16. Sherd of a vessel made by the South Carolina Pottery Company, c. 1880, marked "S.C.P. Co." Private collection; photograph Carl Steen.

APPENDIX I. THREE W. H. FARRARS  
AND THEIR ANCESTORS



APPENDIX II. INFORMATION PERTAINING TO  
WORKERS AT THE SOUTHERN PORCELAIN COMPANY

Some additional information can be learned about the Southern Porcelain Company from occasional references to one or more of the men who worked there and from 1860 census statistics for those who were probably associated with the company (see below). Many of the workers lived in boarding houses, of which there were three near the factory, run respectively by Betsy Pond, Mrs. C. Cassle, and Stephen Keiser and his wife. The only other industry in the area at the time was the Bath Paper Mill, but it is difficult to be certain who worked where, when dealing with a listing of dwellings and their inhabitants.

In addition to the list of names, spelled here as they were written by hand on the pages of the Census, a few more facts can be added about the factory workers. James Kenny had come south from Vermont, where his daughter had been born more than six years previously. A notice of Kenny's death in the *Augusta Daily Chronicle and Sentinel* of 16 November 1866, said he had at one time been a salesman in the ware room of the Southern Porcelain Company.

Among the men who had worked for the United States Pottery Company before coming to South Carolina was William McLee, an English jigger man. He may well have been the same William McLee who joined forces with George Wolfe to open a pottery in Peoria, Illinois, in the early 1860s.<sup>22</sup> Silas R. Wilcox, a maker of Parian ware, arrived in December 1858 and departed in July 1860.

Factory workers in Bath, South Carolina, listed in the 1860  
United States Census for the Edgefield District

Name	Age	Occupation	Value Real Estate	Value Personal Estate	Place of Birth
Allaway, Chappel B.	17	Factory Operative			South Carolina
Bain, William	55	Agent in Pottery	1,000	25	Scotland
Barter, Mrs. Mary	37	Factory Operative		50	South Carolina
Blackman, S.A.	28	Machinist	250	75	Connecticut
Cinnimin, D.C.	33	Factory Operative		75	South Carolina
Crayon, P.	36	" "	800		Ireland
Creech, Richard	41	" "			"
Cushman, Elbert	21	" "			Vermont
Dizeman, John	23	" "			"
Doherty, James	23	" "			Scotland
Farrar, W.H.	40	Mechanic	1,000	5,000	New Hampshire
Felding, James	26	Factory Operative			England
Friday, Bethana	16	" "			South Carolina
Friday, Malvina	18	" "			" "
Horn, S.A.	21	" "	1,900		Maine
Hughes, James	23	" "			Massachusetts
Jason, William	54	" "		300	"
Kane, John	25	" "			England
Kenny, James	34	" "			Ireland

(Table continued)

Name	Age	Occupation	Value Real Estate	Value Personal Estate	Place of Birth
Lovelace, John C.	33	Mechanic	2,000	300	South Carolina
Manster, Edward	28	Factory Operative			Massachusetts
Martin, Mike	32	" "			Ireland
Martin, Richard	22	" "			New York
McDaniel, Thomas	28	Blacksmith			Georgia
McLee, William	19	Factory Operative			England
McReath, Henry	24	" "		30	"
Nixon, John	49	Mason		25	
Peeler, Henson	39	Carpenter		100	New York
Pollard, William W.	32	Factory Operative	500	50	Indiana
Randolph, Jacob	33	" "			New Jersey
Robinson, Thomas	58	" "			England
Rhodes, James	21	" "			South Carolina
Sanders, John	38	" "			England
Seymour, Jerome	35	" "			Vermont
Stevens, E.	34	" "		200	South Carolina
Torbett, James	56	" "		150	Scotland
Tyler, M.	34	" "	500	300	Maine
Wilcox, R.	20	" "			New York

## NOTES

1. The history of the Rebekah at the Well teapot, as well as the rationale for the archaic spelling of "Rebekah," is discussed in J. G. Stradling, "Puzzling Aspects of the Most Popular Piece of Pottery Ever Made," *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, February 1997, 334-35.

2. The history of the Southern Porcelain Company cited here is from Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, 3d ed., and *Marks of American Potters* (reprint, New York: Feingold & Lewis, 1976), 186-91. The third edition of *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States* was originally published in New York by G. P. Putnam in 1900. *Marks of American Potters* was originally published in Philadelphia by Patterson & White in 1904; in addition to the reprint cited above, it was reprinted separately by Cracker Barrel Press of Southampton, N.Y. (c. 1971), and by Ars Ceramica of Ann Arbor, Michigan (1976).

3. *Ibid.*, 187-88.

4. *Ibid.*, 188.

5. Ledgers of the Bath Fire Brick Works, in the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, indicate that on 27 April 1864, the Southern Porcelain Company settled a bill with that firm for \$1,750.

6. The account was reprinted on 19 October 1864 in the *Edgefield* (South Carolina) *Advertiser*.

7. Mary E. Davison, "William H. Farrar, Potter," *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, March 1939, 122-23.

8. Information on the Farrar family was drawn from three major sources: (Timothy Farrar, 1788–1874), *Memoir of the Farrar Family, by a Member of the New England Historical Genealogical Society* (Boston, 1853), 12, 37, 48, 43; Lura Woodside Watkins, *Early New England Potters and Their Wares* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), 113, 139, 148; Elizabeth Collard, *Nineteenth-Century Pottery and Porcelain in Canada* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), 271.
9. *Memoir of the Farrar Family*, 38, 43.
10. William H. Farrar vs. Christopher W. Fenton & the United States Pottery Co., Bill and Cross Bills filed in the Bennington County Court of Chancery, December 1857 to December 1860 and Decree of June 1865. Vermont State Archives, Montpelier. Henceforth cited as Farrar vs. Fenton & the U.S. Pottery Co. My thanks to Warren F. Broderick and Catherine Zusy for providing copies of this material.
11. An article in *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, Boston, 22 October 1853, 261.
12. *Bennington Banner*, 13 March 1853; notebooks of Dr. Burton N. Gates, who interviewed surviving workers from the Bennington Pottery in 1914 and 1915, in the Bennington Museum Collection, Bennington, Vermont (courtesy of Catherine Zusy).
13. *Deed Book* 33, Town Clerk's Office, Bennington, Vermont, 522–24.
14. Farrar vs. Fenton & the U.S. Pottery Co.
15. Bradford L. Rauschenberg, "Andrew Duche: A Potter 'a Little Too Much Addicted to Politicks,'" *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, XVII, 1 (May 1991), 30, 56–57. For more information about the history of ceramics and the search for kaolin clays in South Carolina, see other articles by Rauschenberg in the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, XVII, 1 and 2 (May and November 1991).
16. Farrar vs. Fenton & the U.S. Pottery Co.
17. This, the two paragraphs above, and other paragraphs below concerning legal actions, were taken from Farrar vs. Fenton & the U.S. Pottery Co.
18. *The Potters and Potteries of Bennington*, by John Spargo, (New York: Antiques, Inc., 1926; reprint, the Cracker Barrel Press, n.d.), 133–34, 142.
19. Notebooks of Dr. Burton N. Gates, quoting Dr. Silas R. Wilcox.
20. Floyd R. Mansberger with Eva Dodge Mounce, *The Potteries of Peoria, Illinois: Historic Illinois Potteries Circular Series*, II, 1 (Springfield, Ill.: Foundation for Historic Research of Illinois Potteries, 1990), 2–6.
21. Farrar vs. Fenton and the U.S. Pottery Co.
22. Spargo, *The Potters and Potteries of Bennington*, 153.
23. Farrar vs. Fenton and the U.S. Pottery Co.
24. Notebooks of Dr. Burton N. Gates, quoting Dr. Silas R. Wilcox.
25. Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, 175; *The Brooklyn City Directory & Greenpoint Bushwick Directory*, 1854.
26. See Richard Carter Barret, *Bennington Pottery and Porcelain* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1958), p. 122, pl. 173.
27. Personal communication, Larry Veneziano, Chicago, Ill., 1996.
28. The insulator was illustrated in an article by Edward Wenham, "Early Hard-Paste China of Carolina," *The Fine Arts* (August 1933), 31.
29. Edwin AtLee Barber, *Marks of American Potters*, 155.
30. Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, 189, fig. 79. For Champion's work with South Carolina clay, see Bradford L. Rauschenberg, "A Clay White as Linie," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, XVII, 2 (1991), 68–69, and Walter E. Minchinton,

"Richard Champion, Nicholas Pocock, and the Carolina Trade," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 65, 2 (April 1964), 87-97.

31. Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, 188, fig. 78.

32. *Ibid.*, 451.

33. See Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, *American Porcelain 1770-1920* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Abrams, 1989), 111, 112, 116 and illustrations on pages 110 and 117. The Bochs did not begin making porcelain in Greenpoint, however, until the early 1850s rather than 1844. Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, 162.

34. Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan, acc. no. 61.72.13. My thanks to Arthur F. Goldberg for reminding me about this pitcher.

35. A Ceres syrup pitcher in gray-green stoneware is illustrated in Kathy Hughes, *A Collector's Guide to Nineteenth-Century Jugs*, II (Dallas, Tex.: Taylor Publishing Co., 1991). The handle is plain instead of twiggy, and the wheat ears do not reach as high as on the Parian syrup pitcher. My thanks to Jay A. Lewis for bringing this source to my attention.

36. Barret, *Bennington Pottery and Porcelain*.

37. Transcription provided by a descendant of Mrs. Bush (courtesy Stephen Ferrell).

38. United States Census for the First Ward, Trenton, N. J., 1850, p. 297. Jones was 69 years old and his wife Mary was 68.

39. Notebooks of Dr. Burton N. Gates, quoting Henry W. Marsh and Dr. Silas R. Wilcox.

40. John Spargo, "The Facts About Bennington Pottery, II: The Work of Christopher Webber Fenton," *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, May 1924, 237.

41. John Ramsay, *American Potters and Pottery* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1947), 88.

42. According to Edwin AtLee Barber, in spring 1862 Colonel Thomas J. Davies, a cotton planter, was induced by Anson Peeler, who had been working in South Carolina for some eight years, to embark on the manufacture of firebrick near Bath, on the South Carolina railroad. Peeler was put in charge of the company, which at first was called the Palmetto Fire Brick Works, then the Bath Fire Brick Works (Barber, *Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, 248-50 and 465-67). The company employed slaves, as is evidenced in its ledgers by payments to their various masters. Colonel Davies informed Barber that during the first year, the Negroes used their spare time to make homely designs in coarse pottery, such as face jugs of the sort that would later make the Edgefield District famous among collectors of folk pottery.

Barber says that in 1863 a great demand sprang up for earthenware jars, pitchers, cups, and saucers—and the firebrick works was partially transformed to meet the need. Confederate hospitals were supplied with thousands of these articles of rude and primitive shape, the ware being composed of three-fourths to five-sixths parts of kaolin with alluvium earth from the swamp lands of the Savannah River. This composition made a tough body which partially vitrified in burning. With sand and ashes mixed thoroughly as a glaze, excellent results were obtained. The ware was black or brown, clumsy, and entirely devoid of ornamentation.

In the summer of 1864, operations at the pottery were suspended. On August 28, the Fire Brick Works made its final payment of "Confederate States tax." On January 1st, 1865, as General Sherman was turning his attention toward South Carolina, following the Union Army's fiery march from Atlanta to the sea, the company's accounts were settled among the principals and the pottery passed into history. (Ledgers of the Bath Fire Brick Works, Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.)

43. Wheeler's obituary in the 3 April 1866 *Augusta Daily Chronicle and Sentinel* stated that he was "many years ago President of the Merchants and Planters Bank" but "more recently President of the Southern Porcelain Company."

44. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Grey*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 102.
45. Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1887), I, 447.
46. Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, 191.
47. Eugenia Calvert Holland, *Edwin Bennett and the Products of His Baltimore Pottery* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1973), 12, 13.
48. Major E. M. Woodward and John F. Hageman, *History of Huntington and Mercer Counties, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1883), 693.
49. The teapot cited was acquired in 1915 by the Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey. An example of a Mayer anchor pitcher is in the collection of the New Jersey State Museum, Trenton.
50. "Fire Proof Earthenware" was advertised by Day, Venables & Taylor of Norwalk, Connecticut, on 26 November 1833 in the *Norwalk Gazette*. See Watkins, *Early New England Potters and Their Wares*, 201.
51. Document filed under United States Patent No. 164,764.
52. Trade catalogue, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia (courtesy Jane Perkins Clancy).
53. Sale dates, Monday and Tuesday, December 10–11, 1917.
54. Barber's *Marks of American Potters*, originally published in 1904, was out of print by the 1940s and rarely found in libraries. Until the book was reprinted around 1971 by Cracker Barrel Press in Southampton, New York, many collectors relied on the United States section of Thorn's book.
55. Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan, acc. 7.64.23 a and b. My thanks to Arthur F. Goldberg for this information.
56. Woodward and Hageman, *History of Huntington and Mercer Counties, New Jersey*, 689; Barber, *Marks*, --.
57. *Crockery and Glass Journal*, probably vol. 3, no. 24 or 25 (June 1876), p. 18. The issues originally consulted were lost more than twenty years ago by the New York Public Library and presumably destroyed.
58. Mansberger and Mounce, *The Potteries of Peoria, Illinois*, 2.

As well as the persons noted above and in the photo captions, thanks are due to Bradford L. Rauschenberg of MESDA for insisting that the author tackle this subject, to the author's long-suffering wife Diana, to George R. Hamell, Susan H. Myers, Carl Steen, and to everyone who contributed over the years to the file on the Southern Porcelain Company at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

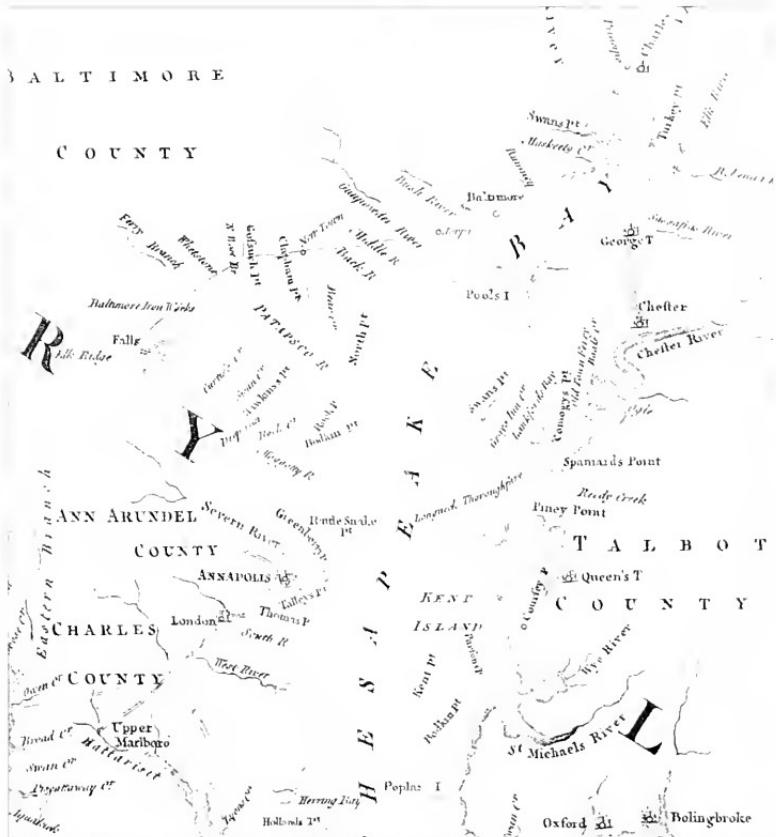
# "At Elk Ridge Furneis As You See, William Williams He Mad Me"

The Story of an Eighteenth-Century  
Maryland Iron Furnace

RONALD W. FUCHS II

THE IRON INDUSTRY was one of America's earliest, largest, and most productive industrial enterprises. Numerous ironworks were established in colonial America, and many of them thrived, producing large amounts of iron for both domestic consumption and export. Among these was the Elk Ridge Furnace, founded in 1755 near Elk Ridge Landing, Maryland (fig. 1). Although little of the eighteenth-century furnace complex survives above ground due to flooding and nineteenth-century rebuilding, the Elk Ridge Furnace is well documented through surviving account books and several examples of its output. Foremost among these is a large cast-iron fireback (fig. 2) bearing the inscription, "At Elk Ridge / Furneis as you See / William Williams / He Mad me / In the Year of / Thousand / 762."<sup>1</sup> This rare survival of southern iron-work is made even more significant by the identification of its maker, William Williams, the founder at Elk Ridge between 1759 and 1768. At a time when few craftsmen signed their work, Williams left his mark in letters cast three inches high, providing for posterity proof of his art and his existence.

A L T I M O R E



1. Detail of Map of the Most Inhabited Part of Virginia Containing the Whole Province of Maryland . . . drawn by Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, London, 1775, showing the location of Elk Ridge on the Patapsco River. Baltimore was moved from the location shown on the map to the point marked North Point in the mid-eighteenth century. MRF-5068.

The iron industry was one of America's earliest industrial success stories. The combination of steady demand, encouragement from British and colonial governments, and ready capital led to the creation of numerous ironworks in colonial America. Ironworks were founded as early as 1619, and by the eve of the American Revolution, the colonies were the world's third largest producer of pig iron, casting approximately fifteen percent, or 3,000 tons, of the annual total world output.<sup>2</sup>

A majority of America's colonial ironworks were located in Maryland and Virginia. The Chesapeake region was particularly well suited to the iron industry, a fact recognized by Dr. Charles Carroll of Maryland in 1732: "In Virginia and Maryland . . . is found great Quantetys of the best Kind of Iron ore and such as makes the Toughest and best Kind of Iron . . . There are also commodious Runs for Furnaces and Forges and likewise wood in Plenty."<sup>3</sup> The iron industry was also compatible with tobacco cultivation, which was the mainstay of the eighteenth-century Maryland economy. Wealthy planters had the necessary capital, land, and labor for producing iron, and the tobacco trade provided regular shipping between the Chesapeake and England. In addition, as a potentially profitable investment opportunity, the iron industry was an attractive alternative to the lucrative but often unpredictable tobacco trade.<sup>4</sup> For some Maryland families like the Carrolls, Ridgelys, and Dorseys, iron became a major source of income that supplemented, and sometimes even overshadowed, their income from tobacco.

At least thirty-six iron furnaces existed in Maryland during the eighteenth century, and two of these, the Principio Company and the Baltimore Company, were among the largest industrial enterprises in eighteenth-century America. The existence of iron ore in Maryland was recognized as early as 1608, when John Smith noted iron-rich clays in the Patapsco River valley, but iron production did not really begin in Maryland until the early eighteenth century. Once begun, however, the iron industry grew rapidly. By 1754 Governor Horatio Sharpe reported that there were seven furnaces in the

colony, and by 1761 there were eight, producing approximately 2,500 tons of pig iron annually. By 1761 there were also ten forges in Maryland, where cast-iron pigs were transformed into wrought-iron bars through a process of repeated heating and hammering.<sup>5</sup> By the time of the American Revolution, iron was Maryland's third most valuable export after tobacco and wheat.<sup>6</sup> Though increased competition and economic fluctuations after the American Revolution caused Maryland ironworks to lose their preeminence, iron production continued to expand in Maryland until the Civil War.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE ELK RIDGE FURNACE

The Elk Ridge Furnace is located at the falls of the Patapsco River approximately ten miles upriver from Baltimore.<sup>8</sup> The furnace was built near Elk Ridge Landing, a settlement on the south bank of the Patapsco that was founded in the 1690s. By the time the furnace was founded in 1755, Elk Ridge Landing was an important commercial and shipping center that boasted wharves, warehouses, a custom house, and a tobacco inspection house. It was also a prime location for an iron furnace; there was a good supply of timber and ore, and the site was accessible to navigable waterways.

The furnace was financed by the partnership of Alexander Lawson, Edward Dorsey, and Caleb Dorsey, Jr. The partnership was formed sometime prior to July 1755, for on 29 July, the partners received one hundred acres from the colony through a writ of *ad quod damnum*.<sup>9</sup> The furnace was built soon thereafter on a parcel of land belonging to Caleb Dorsey known as Moore's Morning Choice.<sup>10</sup> The existence of iron pigs marked "Elk Ridge 1755" show that production began almost immediately.<sup>11</sup>

Caleb Dorsey seems to have provided most of the direction and leadership at the furnace; he owned the land on which the furnace was built, and the company created to manage the furnace and the attached store was named Caleb Dorsey and Company. Dorsey was also involved in other ironworks; in 1758, he helped build the Curtis Creek Furnace downriver from Elk Ridge, and sometime after 1761

he built Dorsey's Forge, an iron forge and slitting mill, upriver from Elk Ridge.<sup>12</sup> Dorsey's investment in the iron industry certainly paid off; the Elk Ridge and Curtis Creek furnaces had a combined value of approximately 10,500 pounds sterling in 1772, and Dorsey himself was worth 10,000 pounds at his death in 1771.<sup>13</sup>

While no description of the eighteenth-century Elk Ridge Furnace survives, it was probably similar to other Maryland furnaces. In 1783, a typical furnace was described as "a blast furnace with a chimney twenty-four to thirty feet high, the greatest diameter of which is eight feet in the smelting room; but only two feet at the mouth."<sup>14</sup> The "chimney" was a truncated stone or brick pyramidal structure approximately twenty-five feet square at the base. The "smelting room" was a hollow, bottle-shaped interior, known as a bosh.

An earthen or timber ramp led to the mouth of the furnace, where controlled amounts of iron ore, charcoal, and oyster shell or limestone flux were poured into the bosh. Blasts of air from water-driven bellows entered the base of the furnace through a tuyère arch and produced the high temperature that drove off the oxygen from the ore, replacing it with carbon, creating a material known as pig iron. Impurities were attracted to the flux, producing a glass-like waste product known as slag. The molten iron collected in the bottom of the furnace. Periodically, the furnace would be tapped and the iron drawn off for casting. The iron was cast directly into objects such as firebacks or kettles, or it was cast into bars, or pigs, which could later be transformed into wrought iron at a forge.<sup>15</sup>

A bellows house and casting house were generally built around the base of the furnace stack. The former contained the water wheel and bellows, and the latter contained the sandy floor where the iron was cast. A race, or channel, provided water for the wheel that operated the bellows. Scattered nearby were barns and sheds for the furnace animals, charcoal, iron, and equipment; housing for the furnace workers; and the company store.<sup>16</sup>

Iron ore was mined from nearby ore banks. Samuel Hermelin, a Scandinavian ironworker traveling through America in 1787, noted, "At Elkridge the usual kind of ore is gray, petrified iron clay with a

brown crust, with a grayish-yellow and dark brown druse-like coating of *eisenblut* [iron flowers] also red and yellow petrified iron clay and brown mixed with fine glimmer and black radiating schorl.<sup>17</sup> Ore was found in banks six to eight feet deep and relatively close to the surface, and was dug by either surface mining or tunneling. Both methods seem to have been used at Elk Ridge. Hermelin noted several caved-in tunnels and airshafts near Elk Ridge in 1787, and several open mines were observed in the early twentieth century. One was described as "a very old opening, the sides of which are now washed in" and the other, much newer, was a pit 150 feet in diameter and twenty feet deep.<sup>18</sup>

Charcoal came from wood cut and burned in nearby forests. Elk Ridge, like all other charcoal-fueled furnaces, had a gang of colliers who worked full-time to supply the furnace with fuel. Either limestone or oyster shell could be used as flux. The 186 bushels of oyster shells delivered to the furnace on 14 May 1762 suggest that the latter was used at Elk Ridge.<sup>19</sup>

Furnaces usually remained in blast for six to nine months, and blasts that lasted up to a year were not uncommon. While in blast, a furnace would be tended twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Furnaces often went out of blast late in the year, in preparation for the customary Christmas holiday and the termination of slave leases. Blasts also ended when fuel or ore ran out, when the race froze or the water level became too high or low to safely operate the wheel, or when the furnace needed repairs.

#### FIRING THE FURNACE: THE LABOR FORCE AT ELK RIDGE

A typical eighteenth-century Maryland furnace required a labor force of about seventy skilled and unskilled workers. Elk Ridge, like most southern furnaces, relied on a combination of free and unfree labor, including enslaved African-Americans who belonged to the furnace itself or were rented from slaveholders and Anglo-American indentured servants, convicts, and free laborers.

In a country where labor was in short supply, finding and retaining dependable workers was difficult and expensive. Skilled laborers were especially hard to find, and the Elk Ridge Furnace frequently advertised for skilled laborers, such as sand molders, potters, and forge managers.<sup>20</sup> Unskilled or semi-skilled laborers, in the form of hired hands, indentured servants, and convicts, were easier to obtain, and the furnace account books and runaway notices in local newspapers show that Elk Ridge did rely on this type of labor.<sup>21</sup> However, free workers could quit, indentures ended, and convicts could run away. What an iron furnace needed was a dependable, skilled, and permanent workforce.

The solution most southern furnaces turned to was slave labor. Samuel Hermelin noted, "Negroes are used to a very small extent in Pennsylvania; but on the other hand, in Maryland, Virginia, and the remaining southern states all work is done by them."<sup>22</sup> Furnace owners recognized that while the initial investment cost was high, once bought and trained, slaves were a permanent and relatively dependable and economical labor force. Dr. Charles Carroll advised that a furnace owner should, as soon as possible, "get Young Negro lads to put under the Smiths, Carpenters, Founders, Finers, and Filers as also to get a certain number of able Slaves to fill the Furnace, Stock the Bridge, Raise Ore, and Cart and burn the same."<sup>23</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century, it was not uncommon for the entire workforce of a furnace, except the manager, chief founder, and clerk, to be made up of slaves. Though Elk Ridge continued to rely on a mixture of free and unfree laborers, a majority of its workforce, including some of its most skilled workers, were slaves. Among these were three founders who appear in Caleb Dorsey's list of "24 Negroes at the Furnace." Their skill gave them a high value; Cuffee and Cyrus were each worth sixty pounds, and Jack, who was Dorsey's most valuable slave, was worth eighty pounds.<sup>24</sup>

The efficiency and productivity of the workforce was one of the main concerns of furnace owners. Maintaining discipline and motivation was always a challenge, especially with unfree workers who had no personal stake in the furnace's success. Masters realized that

they needed the cooperation and hard work of their slaves in order to prosper. In turn, slaves realized that this gave them some leverage in dealing with their masters. As a result, a complex relationship developed between masters and slaves that was based more on a subtle process of mutual compromise and accommodation rather than physical fear or coercion.<sup>25</sup>

One way in which this complex relationship manifested itself was the “overwork system.” Laborers were allowed, and even encouraged, to work overtime, and were paid for any work they did beyond their assigned duties. At Elk Ridge, slave founders were paid for extra casting, and any laborer could cut wood for two shillings per cord.<sup>26</sup>

The overwork system benefited both master and slave. It gave slaves a stake in the furnace’s success, motivating them in ways that threats or force could not. Overwork also enabled slaves to enhance their quality of life, providing them with a small measure of psychological independence and the ability to purchase modest luxuries.<sup>27</sup> Slaves at Elk Ridge bought rum, whiskey, molasses, sugar, pepper, linen, cotton, shoes, stockings, ribbons, handkerchiefs, buttons, buckles, knives, and even a padlock.<sup>28</sup> Though the effects of this freedom should not be overestimated, it clearly improved the quality of life for the slaves who were able to benefit from it.

The furnace accounts show that many of the slaves at Elk Ridge took advantage of overwork opportunities; in October 1766, for instance, forty-six of the 316 “debts due from the co.” were to slaves. Though most were for small amounts, some were for relatively large sums, such as the seven pounds that Joe made in June 1764 by cutting seventy-six cords of wood.<sup>29</sup>

Though the furnace master, in this case, Caleb Dorsey, was in charge of the management of the furnace, the chief founder ran the day-to-day operations of the furnace, such as supervised the workers and directing the casting. The founder at Elk Ridge between 1759 and 1768 was William Williams. Like many other iron founders in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake, Williams was probably an English immigrant, attracted to Maryland by the opportunities for advancement.<sup>30</sup>

Williams was first employed at the Baltimore Iron Works, where he is listed as the founder in an undated "List of Persons Employed at the Furnace and Forge."<sup>41</sup> He was probably working at Baltimore by 1746, for in that year three Irish servant men ran away from the furnace, taking with them "a Dutch Servant woman belonging to William Williams at the Iron Works."<sup>42</sup>

Williams probably began working at the Elk Ridge Furnace in early 1759, for on 21 July of that year Williams made his first documented purchases at the company store run by Caleb Dorsey and Company.<sup>43</sup> Company stores were an important part of most Chesapeake furnaces, supplying furnace employees and the surrounding community with goods and the opportunity to establish credit in a cash-poor economy.<sup>44</sup>

During his tenure at the furnace, Williams made regular and frequent purchases at the company store. These were debited against his account, which was credited with his pay at the end of each blast. The majority of his purchases were groceries; cheese, butter, herrings, oyster, pepper, molasses, sugar, and tea. In addition, Williams purchased textiles, tools, shoe and knee buckles, newspapers, a hat for his apprentice, and fetters, either for an animal or a slave. Williams also had the store pay other individuals out of his account for shoeing his horse, repairing his watch, and delivering his mail.<sup>45</sup>

But by far the most common and constant purchase that Williams made at the store was alcohol. Williams purchased rum by the pint, quart, or gallon on an almost weekly basis. He often purchased sugar at the same time, suggesting he was mixing the two together to make grog. Williams's purchases added up to a large amount of alcohol, such as the seven gallons he purchased in March and April 1762.<sup>46</sup> While it is possible that Williams consumed all of this alcohol himself, it is more likely that at least some of it was intended for his workers.

Alcohol was an important part of the diet and social life of iron workers, and evidence suggests that the alcohol consumption of furnace workers was higher than that of the general population. Stephen Onion, one of the principle investors in the Principio Com-

pany, reported that “too much Strong Liquid dayly disordered more or less of the workmen [at the Principio Furnace] and is the occasion of bad language and quarrell.”<sup>37</sup> While “Strong Liquid” did cause headaches for furnace owners, alcohol was seen as a necessity by most furnace workers. Alcohol, especially when cut with sugar, was a quick source of warmth, energy, and stimulation, which was needed during the long hours and hard labor necessary to keep a furnace going. Alcohol was also a source of relaxation and escape for workers. Though it is clear that workers, including slaves, bought alcohol for themselves in small quantities, it is likely that Williams treated his workers frequently, either to encourage them to work harder or in reward for a job well done.

In 1761, while working at Elk Ridge, Williams purchased 499 acres of land in Baltimore County, which he named Mount Gilboa. Sometime after he left the furnace, and possibly even before, Williams opened a store on the property. In 1771, he sold part of this land to Joseph, Andrew, Nathaniel, and John Ellicott, who built a mill on the property.<sup>38</sup>

Williams seems to have left the Elk Ridge Furnace sometime after 1768. His last entry in the store ledgers occurs in September, and by July 1770, George Teall was being paid for casting the iron at Elk Ridge.<sup>39</sup> Williams died prior to 20 February 1775, for on that date, Joseph Ellicott and Benjamin Wells made “an Inventory of the Goods and Chattels late the property of William Williams deceased.” Mary, his wife, was listed as the administratrix of the estate. Williams’s estate, worth 362 pounds, included twelve slaves, four horses, a number of cows, sheep, and pigs, and a collection of farm tools and household furnishings. Among the relatively modest furnishings were several items that suggest that Williams was aware of the growing notions of refinement and gentility, such as a watch, knives and forks, tea equipage, and a small library consisting of “a large bible, three old books, an old *Joseph’s History*, [and] *The Tatlers*, four volumes.”<sup>40</sup> The only evidence of iron work in the inventory were a pair of iron fire dogs, a chimney rack, and a “quantity of old iron.”<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Elk Ridge Furnace produced a combination of pig iron and finished castings. As was typical for most Chesapeake furnaces, pig iron made up a majority of the furnace's output. In 1762, for instance, Elk Ridge produced 480 tons of pig iron, in comparison to a mere six tons of finished castings.<sup>42</sup> Pigs are rectangular bars of cast iron that ranged in weight from less than eight to over fifty pounds.<sup>43</sup> Some of the pigs at Elk Ridge were even heavier, weighing close to 100 pounds; similar pigs from the Curtis Creek Furnace were 48 inches long, 6 inches wide, and 3 inches high.<sup>44</sup>

The majority of the pigs seem to have been intended for export. An account of iron shipped from Elk Ridge in 1757 and 1758, the earliest account of the Furnace's output to survive, reveals that at least 1,080 tons of iron had been exported by that date.<sup>45</sup> The furnace shipped iron through the port of Annapolis as early as 1756, with the majority headed for the English cities of London and Bristol.<sup>46</sup> The wide distribution of iron from Elk Ridge is illustrated by the discovery of pigs on the *Griffin*, an English East India Company ship that was lost off the coast of the Philippines in 1761.<sup>47</sup>

Some, if not all, of the pigs produced at Elk Ridge were marked with the furnace's name and the date of casting, and pigs dated 1755, 1757, 1758, and 1769 have been recorded.<sup>48</sup> These markings were in response to an Act of Parliament passed in 1750 which insisted that, "such Pig or Bar Iron shall be stamped with some Mark denoting the Colony or Place where the same was made."<sup>49</sup>

Along with the ubiquitous iron pigs, the Elk Ridge Furnace also produced finished castings. Finished castings made at Elk Ridge included cannon and cannon balls for the Revolutionary War effort and anvils, cart boxes,<sup>50</sup> andirons, and firebacks for use in nearby communities.

Next to cannons, the largest iron objects produced at Elk Ridge were firebacks. A fireback is described in an eighteenth-century encyclopedia as "a large plate of cast iron, usually decorated in low relief, serving not only to preserve the stone work of the chimney

back, but also to reflect the heat of the fire forward."<sup>41</sup> Firebacks were made using a carved wooden mold, which was pressed into wet sand in the casting house floor to create an impression that was then filled with molten iron. Not just for practical use, firebacks were usually decorative luxury items, and were relatively expensive: the Reverend James McGill bought "one back and one pair andirons" for £3.6.6 in November 1760.<sup>42</sup>

One fireback made at the Elk Ridge Furnace survives. It is a large rectangular plate of roughly cast iron over four-and-one-half feet long and three feet tall. It is decorated with canted corners, molded edges, and a heat-shaped panel that extends above the top of the plate. Within the heart is the inscription in bold, cursive letters: "At



2. Fireback, cast iron, marked "At Elk Ridge / Furneis as you See / William Williams / He Mad me / In the Year of / Thousand / 762," Elk Ridge Furnace, Howard County, Maryland. HOA 38 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", WOA 56 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Courtesy Winterthur Museum. Acc. 66.518.

Elk Ridge / Furneis as you See / William Williams / He Mad me / In the Year of / Thousand / 762."

The fireback was made sometime prior to August 1762, for in that month the Elk Ridge Furnace went out of blast. On 9 August, Williams's account was credited £70.19.8 "for 480 tons pig iron and 6 tins 17 count 24 pounds castings," and on 18 August, the account of Caleb Dorsey was debited for "480 Tons pig iron 6 Tons 17C 24LB Castings 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Tons Scraps and an Iron Back given to William Williams."<sup>53</sup>

Although Williams's name stands alone, the fireback was actually the product of a skilled team of white and black founders. The same entry that recorded Williams pay for casting iron in 1762 also paid Thomas Vaughn, Boy Jack, and Great Jack for "his part castings." Vaughn received 2 pounds, 18 shillings, and 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cents, and Boy Jack and Great Jack each received 1 pound, 9 shillings, and 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cents.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Vaughn was an indentured servant, and Boy Jack and Great Jack were slaves. Great Jack was probably the property of the furnace, and Boy Jack belonged to Caleb Dorsey, who listed him in his will as "my Negro founder."<sup>55</sup> The relatively small sums they were paid suggests that these were wages for overwork, or possibly even a bonus for their labor.

The William Williams fireback is an unusual survival and has no known parallel among eighteenth-century English and American firebacks. In size and shape it most closely resembles sixteenth- and seventeenth-century provincial English firebacks, which tended to be long and rectangular with minimal decoration.<sup>56</sup> By the early eighteenth century, these had been replaced by square or arched firebacks with more elaborate surface decoration. Influenced by Dutch baroque design, these were more suitable for the smaller fireplaces and more decorative interiors of eighteenth-century upper-class homes.<sup>57</sup>

The inscription and decoration of the fireback is equally unusual. While firebacks and stove plates were often inscribed with the name of the furnace or the furnace owner, it was less common to find

them inscribed with the name of the founder.<sup>58</sup> The use of script, as opposed to Roman lettering, is equally rare, and may be without parallel. The use of the heart is also without parallel in English or American ironwork. Hearts were common decorative elements in German decorative arts, but they were used in different ways on ironwork.<sup>59</sup>

In comparison to other examples of southern iron, the William Williams fireback is not a masterpiece. By the mid-eighteenth century, several southern furnaces, such as the Marlboro Furnace in the Valley of Virginia, were producing finely made firebacks and stove plates with sophisticated baroque and rococo decoration made from molds carved by the finest Philadelphia carvers.<sup>60</sup> In comparison, the casting of the Elk Ridge fireback is almost crude. The unusually large size of the Williams fireback suggests that it was designed for a specific fireplace and was intended to be an advertisement for the Elk Ridge Furnace and its founder, William Williams. While the inscription is more personal than most, it fits well within the group of American firebacks that are marked with the name of the furnace or furnace master. The fireback, with its highly personal and self-congratulatory inscription, is also clearly a pronouncement of William Williams's pride in his work.

The possibility exists that at least one other fireback was cast by William Williams. In 1847, it was reported that in the Nathaniel Ellicott house in Ellicott City was a fireback seven feet long and four feet high with the inscription, "At Elk Ridge Furnace, as you see, William Williams he mad me, in the Year of '63." Though the inscription is almost identical, the differences in size and date, as well as the fact that Ellicott's fireback was washed out of his house in an 1868 flood, suggest that it is a second fireback.<sup>61</sup> There are several examples of firebacks and stove plates from the same furnace with the same inscriptions that have different dates, and it would have been a relatively minor procedure to alter a date on the wooden fireback mold.<sup>62</sup>

THE LATER HISTORY  
OF THE ELK RIDGE FURNACE

After William Williams left Elk Ridge in 1768, the position of chief founder was filled by George Teall. Caleb Dorsey continued to operate the furnace until his death in 1771, at which point the furnace passed to his sons, Samuel (1741–1777) and Edward (1758–1799). During the Revolution, the furnace made ironwork for the Continental Army; Samuel Dorsey received orders to cast cannon and to forge bayonets. The "few pair of 4 Lb. CANNON and 6, 4, 3, Lb. GRAPE SHOT," offered for sale at Elk Ridge in a 1782 advertisement are no doubt part of the wartime output.<sup>61</sup> In 1789, the furnace was described as an 800-acre tract on which "there are erected every necessary improvement . . . the furnace is in good order."<sup>62</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, the Elk Ridge Furnace was leased to Alexander Elliott and Brothers. They rebuilt the furnace in 1826, which was then described as being 32 feet tall, with an eight and one-half foot diameter bosh. The furnace employed about a hundred men, and had an annual output of 1,400 tons of iron.<sup>63</sup> The Ellicotts purchased the furnace in 1836, and by 1850 the furnace was

3. Earthen ramp and retaining wall, early nineteenth century, Elk Ridge Furnace, Howard County, Maryland.  
*Photograph Ron Fuchs II.*





4. Furnace master's house (right), c. 1835, and workers' dormitory and company store (left), mid-nineteenth century, Elk Ridge Furnace, Howard County, Maryland.

valued at \$40,000 with an annual output of 2,000 tons of pig iron and 2,400 tons of cast-iron pipe.<sup>66</sup> By 1858 the furnace was the property of the Great Falls Iron Company, which purchased "the Elk Ridge Landing property on the Patapsco with Furnace, Store House, Farm and Dwelling Houses, Etc, and 985 Acres of Land adjoining or in the vicinity of the same," for \$59,000.<sup>67</sup> Though damaged by floods in 1868, the furnace continued to operate until 1872. Further flooding destroyed the remainder of the furnace complex in 1873.

A large percentage of the nineteenth-century furnace complex survives. Although the furnace stack was demolished for building stones in the early twentieth century, the earthen ramp that led to the top of the furnace and a granite retaining wall survive (fig. 3). In addition, six nineteenth-century structures, including the brick furnace master's house and attached company store and dormitory (fig. 4), a brick duplex that housed workers' families, a frame house, and two log-plank slave quarters (fig. 5) also survive. Within the furnace master's house, two nineteenth-century firebacks survive. One, in the front parlor, is marked "ELLIOTT. ELK RIDGE FURNACE," and the other, in the kitchen, is marked "ELLIOTT. 1833."<sup>68</sup>

The iron industry was one of the eighteenth-century Maryland's



5. Slave quarters, early nineteenth century, Elk Ridge Furnace, Howard County, Maryland.

Photograph Ron Fuchs II.

biggest industrial endeavors. The Elk Ridge Furnace, while not the most important furnace in the colony, was a significant example of this major industry. The furnace's account books and a dated fireback signed by its maker, William Williams, allow us to reconstruct the world of the Elk Ridge Furnace, providing a window onto the history of this furnace, its workforce, and the colonial southern iron industry.

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#### NOTES

1. The fireback is now in the collection of the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum, in Winterthur, Delaware, acc. 66.0518. The furnace account books, covering the years 1758 to 1765, are in the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis. Other papers pertaining to the furnace are at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore.
2. Ronald Lewis, *Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1750-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 11.
3. Letter from Dr. Charles Carroll to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, 1 January 1732. Carroll Family Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.
4. Susan Winter, "The Antietam Furnace: A Frontier Ironworks in the Great Valley of Maryland," in *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake*, ed. Paul Shackel and Barbara Little (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 205.
5. Joseph Singewald, Jr., *Iron Ores of Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1911), 128; A. H. Alexander, *Report on the Manufacture of Iron* (Annapolis, Md., 1840), 70.
6. Michael Robbins, "The Principio Company: Iron-Making in Colonial Maryland, 1720-1781," Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1972, 3.

7. Lewis, 13–14.
8. Today the site of the furnace is in the town of Elkhridge, in Howard County.
9. In 1719, "An Act for the Encouragement of an Iron Manufactory within this Province" passed by the colonial legislature stated, "There are very great conveniences of carrying on Iron Works within this Province which have not hitherto been embraced for want of proper encouragement . . . therefore be it Enacted that if any person or persons shall desire to set up a forging mill or other conveniences for carrying on Iron Works he may get a writ *ad quod damnum*." This was a condemnation procedure that allowed furnaces to acquire a water-power site of one hundred acres. Further legislation in 1722, 1736, and 1750 provided other incentives, such as exemptions from tax levies and compulsory road work. Alexander, 268–69.
10. Chancery Records, Liber IR #5:91, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
11. The pigs were discovered in a scrap yard in Baltimore in 1895. *Elliott City Times*, 8 June 1895.
12. John McGrain, "The Development and Decline of Dorsey's Forge," in *Maryland Historical Magazine* 22, 3 (Fall 1927), 346.
13. Land Records Deed Book, Anne Arundel County, Liber IB#3, 293, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis. McGrain, "Dorsey's Forge," 346.
14. Samuel Hermelin, *Report about the Mines in the United States of America, 1783*, trans. Amandus Johnson (Philadelphia: John Morton Memorial Museum, 1931), 59.
15. The term *pig iron* refers to the form of the casting. Molten iron was run from the furnace through a series of short channels dug into the casting house floor; the arrangement resembled piglets suckling at their mother.
16. Robbins, 161, 251.
17. Hermelin, 39–40.
18. *Ibid.*, 39; Singewald, 270.
19. Store Accounts, Elk Ridge Furnace, Hansen Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.
20. *Maryland Journal*, 22 June 1779; *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, 20 February 1780, 11 December 1792. Courtesy MESDA Research Files.
21. *Maryland Gazette*, 16 August 1759, 10 October 1761, 10 June 1762, 27 September 1764, 16 May 1765, 15 July 1765, 7 October 1765, 28 October 1777. Courtesy MESDA Research Files.
22. Hermelin, 52.
23. "Account and Letter Books of Dr. Charles Carroll," *Maryland Historical Magazine* (September 1930), 299.
24. Inventory of Caleb Dorsey, 21 October 1772. Chancery Records, Liber 42:1, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
25. Lewis, 111–24.
26. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal AA (1761–1762). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
27. Charles Dew, *Bond of Iron: Master and Slaves at Buffalo Forge* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 116.
28. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal (1758–1761), Ledger AA (1761–1762). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
29. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal CC (1764–1772). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
30. Silvio Bedini, *The Life of Benjamin Banneker* (New York: Scribner's, 1972), 51.
31. "List of Persons Employed at the Furnace," Carroll Family Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.
32. *Maryland Gazette*, 27 May 1746. Courtesy MESDA Research Files.
33. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal (1758–1761). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.

34. Robbins, 46.
35. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal (1758-1761), Journal AA (1761-1762), Journal BB (1762-1764), Journal CC (1764-1772). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
36. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal CC (1764-1772). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
37. Letter from Stephen Onion to Dr. Charles Carroll, 1734, quoted in Robbins, 268-69.
38. Bedini, 29, 51. The land the Ellicotts bought is now the site of Ellicott City, in Howard County.
39. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal CC (1764-1772). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
40. Williams purchased the *Tatlers* from Julius Clare, the clerk of Caleb Dorsey & Co., on 15 March 1763 for £13.0.
41. Inventory of William Williams, 20 February 1775, Baltimore County, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
42. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal AA (1761-1762). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
43. William Lynch, "Artifacts," *Maryland Archaeology*, 30.1 (March 1994), 33.
44. *Ellicott City Times*, 8 June 1895, 3; Robbins, 21.
45. "An Account of the Iron Shipped from the Furnace." Hanson Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.
46. Robbins, 221.
47. Charles Daggett, Evelyne Jay, and Frederick Osada, "The *Griffin*, an English East Indian Man Lost in the Philippines in 1761," *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration*, 19.1 (February 1990), 40.
48. Pigs marked "Elk Ridge 1755" and "Elk Ridge 1769" were found in Baltimore in the late nineteenth century (*Ellicott City Times*, 8 June 1895). Pigs marked "Elk Ridge 1758" and "Elk Ridge 1759" were recovered from the *Griffin*.
49. *Great Britain Laws, Statutes, Etc.* (London, 1750), §22. The act was designed to protect the English iron industry by restricting production of iron in the colonies.
50. Cart boxes are the central socket of the hub of a wheel from which the spokes emerge and the axle attaches.
51. *A Supplement to Mr. Chamber's Encyclopedia* (London, 1753), quoted in Henry C. Mercer, *The Bible in Iron* (Doylestown, Penn.: Bucks County Historical Society, 1961), 93.
52. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Journal (1758-1761). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
53. Journal AA (1761-1762). Caleb Dorsey & Co., Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
54. Caleb Dorsey & Co., Ledger AA (1761-1762). Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
55. Will Book WD #3 Part II, 1770-1774. Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
56. Canted corners, such as those on the Williams fireback, are most often found on seventeenth-century firebacks, though a fragment of an early eighteenth-century Virginia fireback with canted corners does show that the style survived in the Chesapeake into the eighteenth century.
57. J. Seymour Lindsay, *Iron and Brass Implements of the English and American House* (Bass River, Mass.: Carl Jacobs, 1964), figs. 20, 21.
58. Mercer, 126, 245. Though one of the earliest surviving firebacks, made in England in 1636, is marked "Richard Lenard Fownder," there are few others signed by the founder.
59. The closest parallels are with Pennsylvania German birth, death, and baptismal certificates which sometimes had a block of text enclosed in a heart-shaped cartouche. Beatrice Garven and Charles Hummel, *The Pennsylvania Germans: A Celebration of Their Arts, 1683-1850* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982), plates 33, 64.
60. John Bivins, Jr., "Isaac Zane and the Products of the Marlboro Furnace," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* XI, 1 (May 1985), 14-65.

61. John Tyson, "The Rise and Progress of the Town of Ellicott's Mills," *Howard District Press*, 1847, n.p. Nathaniel Ellicott had purchased the land on which his house stood from William Williams in 1771, which may explain how Ellicott came into possession of the fire-back.
62. Mercer, 21, 209–14.
63. *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, 13 August 1782. Courtesy MESDA Research Files.
64. *Maryland Gazette*, 26 November 1789. Courtesy MESDA Research Files.
65. Alexander, 90.
66. John McGran, "The Molinography of Maryland." Unpublished manuscript, Maryland Historical Society, n.p.
67. McGran, "The Molinography of Maryland," n.p.
68. The house, and the surrounding site of the furnace, belongs to the state of Maryland and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Book Review

In Pursuit of Artisan Consciousness: A review of Johanna Miller Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky. Pp. xii, 200, b/w illus., index. Cloth, \$34.95, ISBN 0-8131-1908-1.)

Johanna Miller Lewis's welcome study is inspired by two goals. One is a desire to correct the "myths" historians have perpetuated about artisans in the rural colonial South. Almost fifty years ago, when Carl Bridenbaugh devoted the opening chapter of his influential *The Colonial Craftsman* to "The Craftsmen in the Rural South," he found it "obvious" that in the backcountry during the eighteenth century, "beyond basic needs almost no crafts developed." And while in *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* Bridenbaugh put "The Back Settlements" on the historian's map in an evocative chapter, he lent authority to the notion that "back inhabitants lived by a mere subsistence farming," making everything they needed at home. He valorized Moravian artisans of North Carolina to the exclusion of all others.<sup>1</sup> Julia Cherry Spruill, in her long-standard study of women's work in the South, fostered what Lewis calls the "superwoman myth" of the colonial rural housewife who, in addition to performing all the chores of the household economy, managed every phase of textile production.<sup>2</sup> And historians of the Regulation that convulsed the North Carolina backcountry have not so much created myths about artisans as they have left them out.

Lewis's second inspiration is a desire to correct the northern, urban, political bias of historians of artisans in the Revolution and new nation who have focused, until recently, on Boston, New York,

Philadelphia, and Baltimore.<sup>4</sup> Rowan County artisans, she argues, were "not urban and do not have an overwhelmingly cohesive political consciousness"; indeed they show no signs of "group behavior" and are "politically inert." They, rather than the politicized urban artisans, are "'typical' artisans at work during the formative years of American history." Lewis is successful in debunking the myths but falls short of achieving her second goal, in part because of the way she has framed her inquiry.

Happily, this study is part of a small but growing body of scholarship about artisans in southern society, both rural and urban. In the book that emerged from the 1979 Winterthur conference, only one of nine case studies dealt with southern artisans, an essay on the Moravian craftsmen of North Carolina by Paula Welsheimer Locklair, curator of Old Salem, Inc.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, the book that emerged from the 1990 conference on "The American Artisan" sponsored by the George Meany Center of the AFL-CIO opens with a section, "Studies of the Southern Experience" in which four scholars preview works-in-progress on artisans in Annapolis, Baltimore, and Richmond and in Georgia.<sup>6</sup> For rural artisans of the South, Jean B. Russo's study of the free white artisans of Talbot County, Maryland, has set a path-breaking example for scholars beyond the Chesapeake.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, scholars of slavery have reopened the subject of artisans both within and without the plantation system; it is not surprising that artisans, white and black, are central to current re-examinations of Gabriel's Rebellion in Richmond and the Denmark Vesey conspiracy in Charleston.<sup>8</sup>

All this work on the craftsman as citizen is aside from the ongoing scholarship about the artifacts of southern craftsmen that flourishes in a variety of southern research centers and museum settings. Indeed, there are good signs of a breakdown of the once rigid tripartite division of labor in artisan scholarship characterized by Thomas Schlereth at the 1979 Winterthur Conference in which research centered either on the product, the process, or the person, with emphasis on either work, working, or the worker.<sup>9</sup> Some curatorial scholars

are drawing on the new social history, and some scholars of artisans in society and politics are drawing on museum scholarship.<sup>9</sup> Thus Ms. Lewis's book arrives at a point at which we can assess it as a case study and reflect on the directions that scholarship about rural artisans and about artisans in public life might profitably take.

Rowan County seems like a good place to dig for artisans in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. From 1753 to 1770, it "covered approximately the northwest quadrant of the North Carolina; for more than seventeen years it was the single largest county in the backcountry (p. 2). It was a scene of unusually rapid economic growth, with an estimated population of 13,500 by 1767 and about 4,700 taxables by 1771. Most artisans were scattered in the countryside, with a minority concentrated in the major commercial town of Salisbury and in Bethabara and Salem, the flourishing Moravian communities in the Wachovia tract. In the Regulator movement that created a major political crisis from 1766 to 1771, Rowan was a scene of activity close behind Orange and Anson counties.

Her study, Lewis writes, will answer "such questions as: (1) How did artisans help settle Rowan County, and where did they come from? (2) Were some crafts more necessary than others at different stages of development? (3) Did any 'nonessential' crafts ever appear? (4) How did the non-Moravian artisans in Rowan County compare to their Moravian counterparts? (5) And finally, how successfully did artisans participate in backcountry politics?" (p. 3). Given Lewis's critical impatience with the historiography she discusses in chapter 1, which is the *raison d'être* for her study, her answers to the first three questions will not be surprising.

Chapter 2 establishes the presence of artisans in the early settlement of Rowan County from 1753. In the flow of settlers down the Great Road, especially from southeastern Pennsylvania, whence most of them had come from Scotland, Ireland, England, and Germany, artisans in the basic trades were a small but essential minority. The Moravians settled east of the Yadkin River, founding Bethabara, the others west of the Yadkin. A map would have made the narrative easier to follow.

Chapter 3 traces the development of Rowan, 1753–1759, contrasting artisans in the Moravian community, who were guided by the *Oeconomy* of their church elders, with those in Salisbury, “the premier commercial town” of the county, where she sees a swift transition to a market economy. While the multivolume *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina* provides a rich source for Moravian artisans, Lewis has had to track non-Moravian artisans painstakingly in legal documents and public records, working as well with a data base of the 1759 tax list compiled by James Whittenberg, director of her doctoral dissertation. She comes up with 126 artisans (86.5 percent of whom were non-Moravians), in 21 trades, no small feat.

In the rapid growth from 1759 to 1770, the subject of chapter 4, the number of artisans doubled to 328 (269 of whom are non-Moravians) and the number of trades rose to thirty-four. An appendix lists them alphabetically, each by trade. Charts breaking down the crafts for the two dates show the “necessary trades” were more important at the earlier date. By 1770 the “nonessential” trades, producing what are sometimes called “luxury items” and sometimes “consumer items,” had increased. I suspect that Rowan’s settlers whom she shows racing to buy Gottfried Aust’s pottery might take issue with placing potters and gunsmiths in the latter category. And an artisan who became a jack-of-all-trades on the frontier might be amused at the rigid definitions of the trades, taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, that Lewis reprints in an appendix. But these are small uncertainties. The location and pattern of artisans is clear: the basic trades (clothing, building, blacksmiths), were distributed among farmers through the countryside; the towns had both basic trades and a small array of potters, silversmiths, gunsmiths, hatters, etc.

The rapid transformation in the economy Lewis attributes to “three factors” operating together: roads, merchants, and the trading towns. Making good use of four sets of merchant account books, she can show the links of the new towns to external markets in Virginia and in Wilmington and Charleston, a linking she feels “refutes the theory of geographic isolation” (p. 63). Again, the argument begs for

a map and would have been enhanced by reprinting enlargements of Collet's 1771 map with its fascinating array of mills, roads, and geographic features. Her description might then convey a stronger sense of place.

Her treatment of the artisans in the semi-communal Moravian settlements, 1759–1770, the subject of chapter 5, answers her fourth question, but is needlessly marred by a zeal to establish the importance of non-Moravian artisans at the expense of the Moravians and by an enthusiasm for the ethos of individualism. The emphasis is on the church's "financial and social restrictions." Artisans "anxiously awaited the *Oeconomy*'s demise so they could share in profits;" the church "mollified" "only talented craftsmen"; non-Moravian apprentices were accepted reluctantly, and the town of Salem was "constructed at a slow pace" and did not open until 1772. Confronted by the numerous laudatory contemporary observations of Salem's Moravian artisans in the 1770s and beyond, as if they were "extraordinary occurrences," she asks, "Why were these outside artisans ignored?" She grants that "the financial backing of the Moravian church made it possible . . . for the Moravian artisans to work full time at their crafts," unlike other rural craftsmen and more like their urban counterparts, but feels this support only resulted in Moravian artisans "*appearing* more talented, more dedicated, or at least more experienced than other Rowan county craftsmen" (p. 89, emphasis added). In this mood of begrudging recognition Lewis misses an opportunity to probe the unusual range of artisan consciousness displayed in Moravian communal societies, a subject I will return to.

A very original chapter on the county's women artisans offers a convincing argument based on some more assiduous detective work. The public records of Rowan show that "spinster" was a term used to identify a trade and not necessarily an unmarried woman. Indentures show that of seventy-five girls apprenticed from 1753 to 1795, forty-nine were put out to learn the art of spinning and twenty-three were given spinning wheels as freedom dues, a practice parallel to boys being given "the tools of their trade." Other documents make

clear that not all Rowan housewives owned spinning wheels. Female spinsters, aside from housewives, were "usually teenage girls) hired out to different households"; a handful were single women who chose to remain unmarried; some were widows. Given the fact that weavers were the largest single group of male artisans and extrapolating that seven spinners were necessary to provide yarn and thread for one weaver, Lewis hypothesizes that spinsters were the largest single group of female artisans (twenty by 1770) with female weavers the second largest ("at least seventeen . . . up to 1790"). Legal documents and merchant accounts with women enable her to identify a few other female artisans, mostly in the clothing trades. To these can be added a few other trades practiced by the Single Sisters in the Moravian community. This range of evidence about spinning and weaving thus underscores the "fallacy" that they were a normal part of the housewife's duties and not a distinct trade (p. 95). Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has shown a comparable pattern later in Maine; Alan Kulikoff has tried to frame it theoretically.<sup>10</sup> Clearly the hypothesis is worth pursuing elsewhere.

A concluding chapter on "Artisans, The Regulator Crisis, and Politics in Rowan County," while ineffectually argued, raises important questions of how scholars might pursue artisans in agrarian conflicts, which recent scholarship has made clear were pervasive in pre- and post-revolutionary America. The burden of Lewis's argument is "no group participation in politics occurred among Rowan County artisans" although "quite a few artisans were drawn into the crisis on an individual basis." Lewis measures participation in politics quantitatively. Of the county's eight sheriffs (1753-1771), four had been artisans and were every bit as corrupt as nonartisan sheriffs and seem to have been the object of Regulator wrath. Identifying Regulators and anti-Regulators from lists compiled by James Whittenberg, out of 328 artisans, she finds forty-nine, or 15 percent, participating, twenty-one as Regulators, twenty opposed, with eight on both lists. On the basis of these lists, she concludes there was a "lack of group behavior among artisans" that she then interprets as "political inertness."

The method of quantification raises more questions than it answers. We lack explicit standards to weigh the data. What number and proportion of Rowan County *farmers* were on one of the two lists (or on both)? What frequency of names would have been proof of group behavior? What is the significance of the puzzling appearance of artisans on both lists? (We are in the dark because Whittenberg's sources from which he has compiled the lists are not given.) Do we have any evidence of artisans in positions of leadership? As Lewis points out in another connection, "their knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic made [artisans] highly sought after commodities for political office in the backcountry" (p. 137), and she finds that for 1753–1770, fifty-three of 363 constables were artisans. It is more than likely, however, that even if all these questions are answered, the lists would not be evidence for group behavior. The divisions on the lists show would seem to be a profitable starting point for an inquiry, rather than a conclusion.

A problem with this argument is that Lewis offers no account of what the Regulators did and said in Rowan County that might put the lists into context. It may very well be, as she asserts, that "fewer people became agitated to the point of rebellion" in Rowan than in Anson and Orange counties. We are told that Rowan and Anson sent a petition to the Assembly in 1768 (but not given its content); we are not told that in 1769 Rowan County voters sent Christopher Nation to the assembly at the same time Orange County sent the Regulator leader Herman Husband. We learn that several thousand taxable inhabitants withheld payments from corrupt sheriffs. But there is not a word about the Regulator crowd action outside Salisbury in March 1771 against Waightskill Avery, a leading lawyer (perhaps because Lewis derogates crowd actions in Hillsborough as "a serious spree of violence," showing no interest in decoding the crowd). And while the Regulator Benjamin Merrill, a blacksmith, is identified in the text as the only slaveholder among forty-nine artisans, we do not learn until a footnote that his "leadership in the Regulator militia" at the Battle of Alamance led to his being tried for treason and sentenced to be hanged and quartered. Indeed this footnote is

the first and only indication of any Regulator leadership in Rowan County. Thus the account of the Regulation in Rowan remains too patchy and incomplete to give meaning to the lists.<sup>11</sup>

What we seem to be watching in Rowan, as in Anson and Orange counties, is by the consensus of historians a broad-based, popular, essentially agrarian movement. Some artisans participated as individuals on the side of the farmer/planter majority. Some artisans sided with the lawyers, officials, and merchants who led the opposition to the Regulation. This might as easily be characterized as "political activism" as "political inertness."

To explain the participation of artisans in an agrarian movement, one might profitably explore what they might have had in common with either farmers or their opponents. The social context to the fierce Regulator conflict very likely aroused the same producer consciousness among artisans that it did among planters. Whittenberg stresses the influx into the backcountry of professionally trained lawyers who went to Harvard, Yale, or Princeton and read law in eastern law offices. Attorneys "such as Waightskill Avery were well educated, socially polished and well connected." Whittenberg finds in his diary "a haughty disdain" for planters. Artisans might easily have shared the sentiment Avery attributed to the angry crowd that mobbed him: "We shall be forced to kill all the Clerks and Lawyers . . . [T]he Governor and the Assembly made just such laws as the Lawyers wanted."<sup>12</sup>

The arrogant display of classical learning by Orange County judge Maurice Moore in an anti-Regulator diatribe prompted the Regulator leader James Hunter to say: "As to Demosthenes or Cicero, I know nothing about nor who they are."<sup>13</sup> The same spirit was implicit in the seal adopted after the war by the Charleston Mechanic Society: the raised arm of an artisan clenching a hammer beneath the slogan, "Industry Produceth Wealth," echoing the slogan, "By Hammer and Hand All Arts do Stand," adopted by other mechanic societies.<sup>14</sup>

The actions of popular movements offer other clues as to the identities of the participants. While there were four former artisans

among Rowan's embezzling sheriffs, Regulators do not seem to have generalized artisans as the enemy. Regulators in Orange rampaged through Hillsborough, the county seat, but apparently did not do the same in Salisbury which was much more of an artisan town. Rhetoric provides other clues. Regulators generally saw their enemies as officials and lawyers and sometimes "pettifogging lawyers" and "Scotch merchants."<sup>15</sup> They commonly identified themselves as "industrious farmers and planters." Herman Husband in his pamphlets referred to them as "good industrious laboring men," "the common people," "common men," "the poor inhabitants," and "country people"—all terms that could have resonated with artisans.<sup>16</sup>

What then explains divisions among artisans? The larger problem confronting scholars of urban as well as rural artisans is to establish a framework for analysis. It does not take us far enough to say, as Lewis does, that "the rural environment appears to be the decisive variable in explaining the failure of Rowan County artisans to organize politically." Conversely, it oversimplifies to claim that "the crucial element behind the political organization of urban artisans were the urban environment and the gathering of artisans in one location, not the artisans or their crafts."

Granted that artisans have to reach some critical mass to act collectively, the truth of the matter is that in the late eighteenth century, artisans in American cities tugged in a variety of directions and were frequently at opposite poles. It might be possible to study Philadelphia, for example, during the Stamp Act crisis and make lists of active pro- and anti-Stamp Act artisans or do the same in New York City in 1769–1770 for voters who divided between candidates of the Livingstons and the Delanceys.<sup>17</sup> In the 1790s in New York City, as elsewhere, some artisans were Federalists and others Republicans, and a range of hypotheses accounts for the differences.<sup>18</sup>

Artisans also varied from city to city. In Boston, while artisans were the most numerous participants in the most famous events of the Revolution, they took part in them as citizens. They never organized a Committee of Mechanics as did their counterparts in New

York City, or addressed broadsides "To the Tradesmen, Mechanics and Manufacturers" as did their counterparts in Philadelphia. Boston's artisans thus had a low level of mechanic consciousness or group behavior compared to New York or Philadelphia. A decade later it was a different story. In 1788, some 90 percent of the 1,200 masters marched in a parade organized by a Committee of Tradesmen to celebrate of ratification of the Constitution. Even then differences among mechanics remained.<sup>19</sup>

To get at political differences among artisans, rural or urban, there is no escaping the many distinctions artisans drew among themselves. There were of course masters, journeymen, and apprentices (in varying states of cooperation and conflict). There were rich, middling, and poor artisans. There were artisans in the "higher" trades such as silversmiths, and the "inferior trades" like shoemakers. There were, as a newspaper writer in Boston put it in 1785, "whimsical degrees of distinction which are kept up between tradesmen and tradesmen."<sup>20</sup> Artisans also had divergent economic interests depending on the market for their products and labor. In the seaport cities there were maritime trades whose market depended on ocean-going commerce, building trades and a miscellany of trades catering to a protected market of local consumers and trades competing with imported British manufactures. There were, as well, networks of patronage making artisans dependent on merchants or other artisans.

Some such breakdown of country and small-town artisans according to their wealth, status, market, and dependencies might be helpful to account for their political allegiances. Thus in Rowan County I would expect the "necessary" rural artisans who were themselves farmers and whose most numerous customers were farmers (the forty-five blacksmiths, fifty-nine leather workers, and twenty coopers listed in Lewis's Table 4) to go with the tide of the majority of farmers in their neighborhoods. And I would not be surprised if a country blacksmith, whose shop by nature was a crossroads for farmers, became a leader in a farmers' movement. By contrast, in a trading town like Salisbury where artisans might be more dependent

on merchants, lawyers, and storekeepers as customers, they might have gone along with this local gentry, especially the patrons of producers of luxury items. But this is at best a working hypothesis. A hypothetical cabinetmaker in Rowan County, where John Frohock with thirty-eight slaves was one of the wealthiest landholders in the backcountry (and a member of the Assembly),<sup>21</sup> might well have represented him for importing luxury wares from the east or as a slaveholder or for both. Or he might have been dependent upon his patronage. Who knows? Lewis shows that John Lewis Beard, a prosperous butcher "in the German community (but who lived in Salisbury)" had economic relationships with tanners and was the patron of perhaps a dozen artisans. Such networks could shape political allegiances. So could the merchant's extension of credit to his rural customers—and the debtor's resentment of suits brought by lawyers hired by creditors which proliferated in the backcountry in the late 1760s.

Doubtless all this is too economic. There has to be a place for ethnic and religious loyalties. In the non-Moravian German community in Rowan, which Lewis tells us (after completing her analysis of the Regulators) "was staunchly anti-Regulator" (p. 130), one would expect German artisans to go along with their landsmen. Much the same cohesiveness might be assumed for artisans in the Moravian religious communities, which were apolitical and indifferent to the political controversy, or so it is said.

Much in the way that social historians have opened up the question of the *mentalité* or value systems of farmers, so historians of artisans—albeit until recently primarily urban artisans—have identified variations in artisan consciousness. Among recent scholars of southern artisans, James Sidbury has directed attention to what he calls "the world view of slave artisans."<sup>22</sup> For analytical purposes, I go on the assumption that one can distinguish five kinds of consciousness among artisans in the late colonial and revolutionary era broadly defined: craft pride, a sense of the trade, a producer consciousness, a citizen consciousness, and a sense of artisans as a group or of "a mechanic interest," a term that came into increasing usage in the

revolutionary era with the word “mechanic.” These kinds of consciousness overlapped, contributed to each other, faded in and out, and varied from place to place. While craft pride and a producer consciousness may have been inherent in being an artisan, the other forms of consciousness usually developed in adversarial relationships, in conflict with those perceived to be enemies. A shoemaker might be more proud of being a citizen than of being a shoemaker.<sup>23</sup>

Were these various forms of artisan consciousness confined to big cities? I am struck by the rich expressions of artisan consciousness scholars have recently located in small towns. In Connecticut in 1792, for example, 1,400 artisans from twenty towns scattered through the state signed a petition protesting a poll tax as a “discouragement to Mechanical arts” which would force the “valuable laboring part of its Citizens” to leave the state.<sup>24</sup> In the late 1790s, William Manning, a farmer-tavern keeper-laborer in rural Billerica, Massachusetts, drafted a constitution for a national “Laboring Society” with chapters in neighborhoods, towns, and counties to give “the many” the knowledge to keep track of “the few” in high office.<sup>25</sup> Surely the most exuberant celebration of early nineteenth-century craft life came from Lewis Miller (1796–1870), a carpenter in the small town of York, Pennsylvania, a self-taught artist whose drawings and water colors lovingly depicted a panorama of his fellow tradesmen and town folk at work, at play, at worship, and on parade.<sup>26</sup>

How large a “gathering of artisans in one location” (Lewis, p. 127) was necessary for artisans to develop various kinds of consciousness? Pride of craft, the most “given,” did not require a critical mass at all. If migrants into the backcountry could bring with them the rich array of folkways David Fisher has described, artisans also brought with them craft traditions originating in England, Ireland, Scotland, or Germany.<sup>27</sup> Shoemakers, for example, who migrated from the Old World could have brought a rich cultural tradition.<sup>28</sup> Kinship would have enhanced a sense of the trade in more heavily capitalized rural trades like blacksmithing, which Christine Daniels makes clear were usually passed on from father to son.<sup>29</sup> Once the political ferment of the revolutionary era was underway, knowledge of popular actions

circulated from one part of the country to the other. Isaiah Thomas ran full, sympathetic accounts of the Regulators in his paper, the *Massachusetts Spy*, aimed at Boston's mechanics; when the issues got back to North Carolina, the governor ordered them burned by the hangman, and this news was subsequently reported in Boston.<sup>40</sup> The merchant's wagons which carried the artisan's products out of the backcountry could also bring back newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, and books. And in the South, the free white artisan's competition with African-American artisans, slave and free, would have enhanced his collective identity as both white and a mechanic, a theme Richard B. Morris caught fifty years ago and which scholars are now elaborating.<sup>41</sup>

I am taken by the ways in which craftsmen in the relatively small Moravian communities exhibited artisan consciousness. Lewis gives us all sorts of clues which she is reluctant to follow up. The eight pages of photographs of pottery and furniture produced by Rowan County craftsmen she reproduces accompanied by occasional comment about design traditions are striking testimony to pride of craft. (And it is ironic that all but a few of the objects illustrated within the book and on the front and back covers seem to be examples of Moravian craft art.) The entry from a craftsman's diary she places under pictures of tables may be read as a backcountry artisan's pride in his own versatility. Jacob Riis of Bethabara wrote, "One day I am a joiner, the next a carver, what could I not learn if I was not too old?" Producer consciousness surely would have run high among potters, for whom the Moravian brethren held "great sales of earthenware." "People gathered from fifty and sixty miles away to buy pottery but many came in vain as the supply was exhausted by noon," the church annals reported. Salem, Lewis writes, was "a planned town of streets lined with artisans' shops, each advertised by a unique trade sign." If one can imagine an array of signs as striking and as emblematic of their trades as Aust's pottery sign that graces Lewis's cover, what might this tell us about mechanic consciousness in the town as a whole?

Other scholars of the Moravian artisan experience have pointed to other signs of collective consciousness among Moravian craftsmen. Locklair's short essay has a number of vivid images: of artisans singing hymns after the raising of a building; of unmarried male craftsmen living in a Single Brothers' House and Workshop; of a Trade Conference (1775) between masters and journeymen to discuss wages; and of a one-day strike by apprentices (1778) who "calmly walked away from their work, their leaders looking on sadly," as the church records put it, and then faced the discipline of the elders.<sup>32</sup> I know of nothing like any of these occurrences in a large urban center.

We are indebted to Lewis for identifying and analyzing a body of artisans in a rapidly growing backcountry where historians once said they were not supposed to be. In Rowan County, non-Moravian artisans may now take a place alongside their more celebrated Moravian brethren and women artisans alongside men. Scholars who pursue artisan life in other rural areas may now have less of a burden to prove the existence of artisans, a fact that seems obvious only in retrospect. They should feel free to entertain more sophisticated questions, moving from quantitative analysis to consciousness, testing some of the insights of historians analyzing artisans in big cities and exploiting more fully the tantalizing evidence of material culture. The question of whether rural or urban artisans were "typical" is not worth pursuing; there were many types of artisans. There were also commonalities to being an artisan, I would argue, that transcended trade and place and perhaps even race. Thus the emerging scholarship about artisans in the South has the prospect of enlarging our understanding of the experiences and consciousness of American artisans as a whole and their role in shaping American institutions.

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